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CALIFORNIA

ROLLING ROUND THE HORN



THE 'OLIVEBANK'

Running before the wind under all sail

ROLLING ROUND THE HÖRN

BY

CLAUDE MUNCASTER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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P R E F A C E

THIS is the narrative of a voyage in a sailing ship from Australia to the British Isles during a period occupying more than four months. I signed on as one of the crew, and worked as a seaman because I wanted to learn about the blue-water sailor's life at first hand, and for the reason that as an artist I might depict one of the last surviving windjammers which will ever be seen. Within a very brief period such vessels will have vanished from the ocean altogether.

I have endeavoured to present an accurate reflection of fo'c'sle life and its occupants, without troubling to soften effects by too much modifying of sailor language ; for these shipmates were rugged, simple, sincere, and their expressions possessed similar characteristics. To have modified their phrases unduly would have been to present an untrue picture, so I have preferred plain truth. The reader will be able to accompany us through storm and calm ; tropical nights and sunny days when the Trade Winds fill every sail, and the ship slips steadily along her course. He will perceive nautical life from many angles.

As in every other department of life, there is tragedy no less than comedy afloat ; there are times of bitter disappointment and threatening danger. It is hoped

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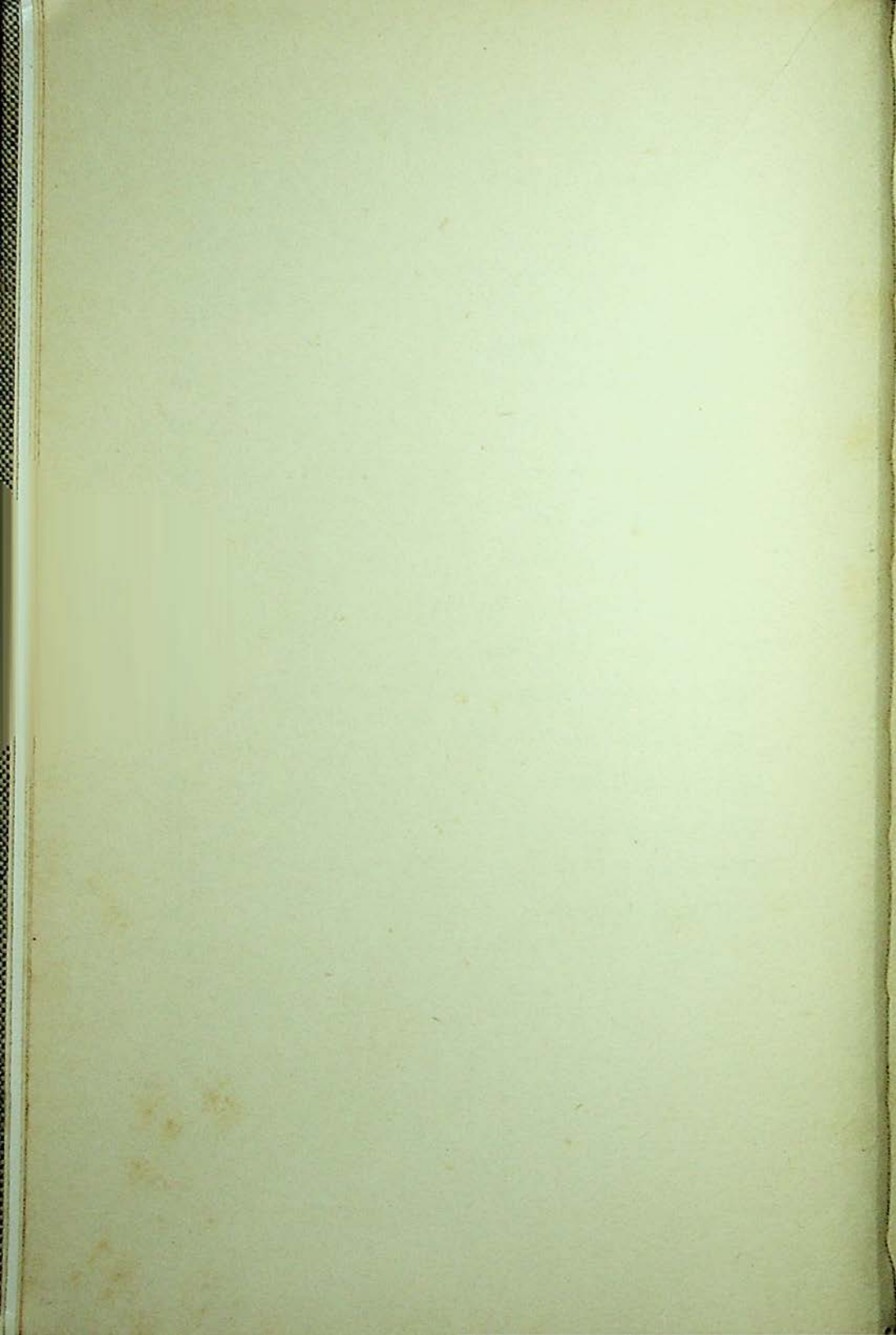
that in these chapters some permanent record may be found of those ill-paid, ill-fed, and much-suffering seamen who belong to that grand tradition of rope and canvas.

The illustrations were made by myself aboard ship.

CLAUDE MUNCASTER.

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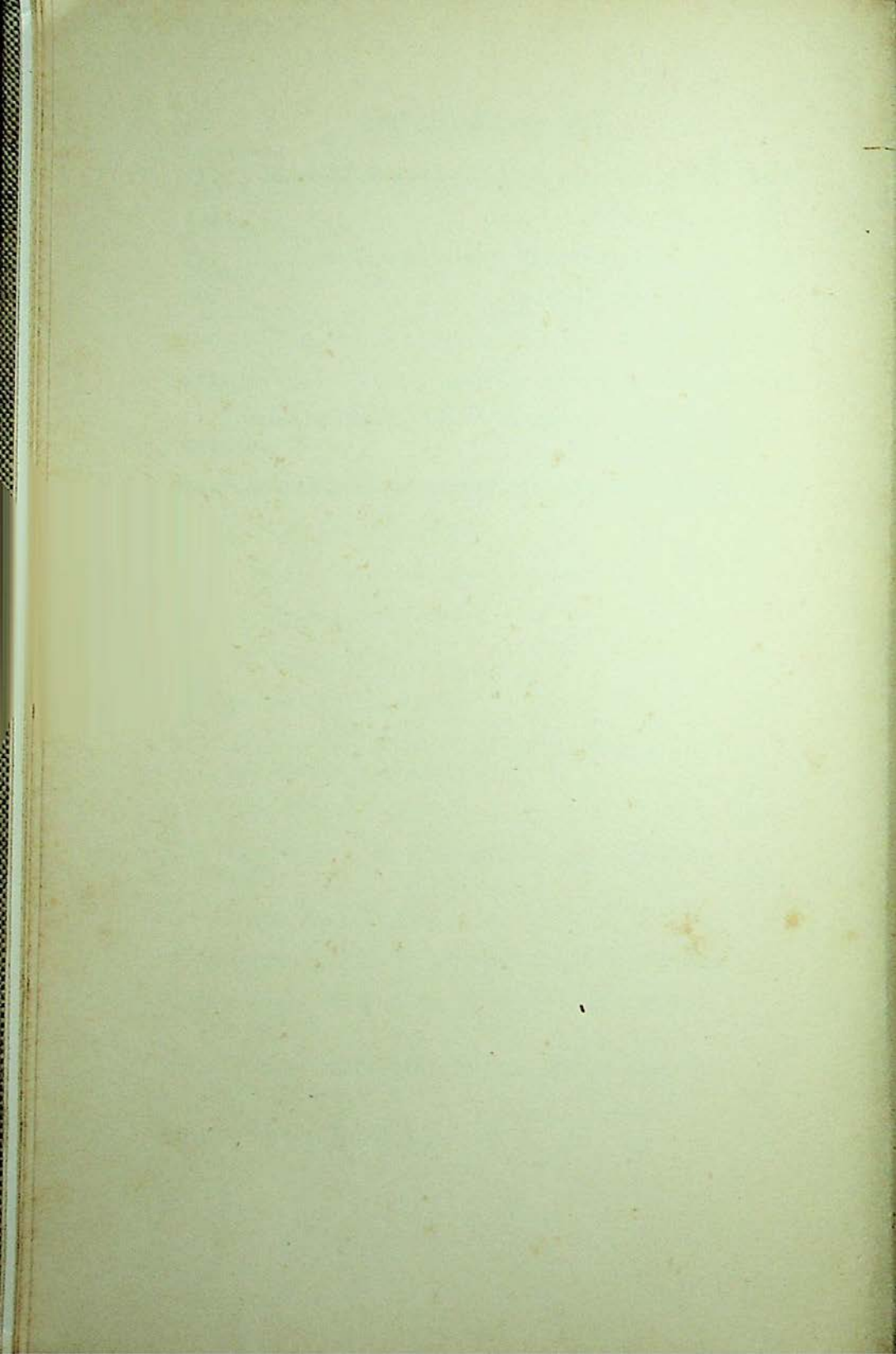
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ROLLING ROUND THE HORN

CHAPTER I

LOOKING FOR A SHIP

NO one in the world would deny that the sea as a great physical force is unequalled ; yet its influence on the mind and will of human beings is not always conceded the historical importance which properly belongs. Throughout the long narrative of things maritime, from the first eras till the present day, there have ever existed side by side two distinct classes which cannot agree : on the one hand are those to whom the ocean (or even the Narrow Seas) cannot even be mentioned except to arouse some feeling of suspense, terror, or distrust ; whilst, conversely, every generation has produced others for whom any ship or any stretch of water signifies the very soul of romantic adventure, and sets up a wild longing to be off on some unlimited voyage.

The world's oldest literature and art all bear evidence to the horror and awe of waves and winds. In our own time probably no single factor has done more to create a prejudice, no feature caused such a harmful effect on imagination, than those unfortunate Channel crossings when small steamers (compelled to keep railway time) are driven in all weathers through broken seas and tide-rips. 'That's quite enough for me,' comes the frequent verdict from the lips of a continental

traveller : ' I can find neither adventure nor romance in being miserably ill. To be tossed this way and that may appeal to certain strange persons. But emphatically not to me.' It is, however, to be noted that the very recent extension of ocean cruising aboard a luxurious liner may do more to kill the old prejudice, and implant a new sea-fascination, than was contemplated by the most optimistic.

Personally, my own attitude towards ships and waves I would express somewhat differently. I would like to queue up in that long procession of sailormen who, throughout the ages, have left shore for sea merely because the latter was irresistible—notwithstanding all reason or persuasion to the contrary. The big modern liner with marble swimming-baths, ballrooms, Ritz-Carlton restaurants, shops, baronial fireplaces, treasure-hunts, theatricals, and cinemas, is a wonderful instance of an attempt to make the passenger forget he is afloat in a vessel. Even when a crack steamer is depicted on the posters, do you ever see her in any position but stolidly upright, as if no sea would dare to break across the bows, no gale make that massive hull to list over ? It is a concession to centuries-old prejudice that the adventurous aspect is kept away from the passenger's imagination : rather let him dwell on the similarity which exists between the interior of a ship and the inside of a palatial hotel. Such a condition of affairs not long since impelled a comic artist to sketch a passenger aboard one of the luxury-liners walking hither and thither, ascending and descending by lift, traversing gilded halls and mammoth staircases, in the effort to find answer to one simple question : ' Please, will you show me the way to the sea ? '

For my own part, I like to look at the sea ; to re-

member that I am on it, and that I am in a ship. The very last thing to please my thoughts would be any environment, any attempt, to make me think otherwise. That's why I ship aboard tramp steamers and wind-jammers. Sometimes I sign on as one of the crew, though this need not always mean that I must do a seafarer's work : it simply puts things right for the authorities, whilst allowing me to enjoy, contemplate, and depict the way of a ship in all manner of seas and winds. Many a reader, I know, will recognise that these opportunities for sketching life under sail are the last chances of an era that is rapidly passing away. It was sail-driven ships which caused the maritime world to be revealed : it was the combination of hemp and canvas which enabled the British Empire to be created. But to-day not one ocean-going sailing ship flies the Red Ensign, and even the enterprising Finns will not be sailing-ship owners much longer. I have lived, worked, and painted aboard more than one of these foreign-registered, but British-built, barques ; and if the experiences were varied, it was not easy for the professional sailorman to observe his everyday environment in the same way as it strikes an artist's eyes.

Once, for instance, I signed on aboard the Finnish barque *Favell* as ship's painter. This was a literally true description, for I painted her from truck to keel. On one occasion only did I fall foul of the Mate for leaving my footmarks on the lid of a fresh-water tank. He had been wondering for some time how those prints had been made. And then one day he caught me doing a short-cut down the main-royal backstay, leaping to the water-tank on the bridge-deck. We were nearing our home-port at the time, and both watches had been busy with paint and polish for quayside admirers. Of

course I apologised and painted out the white marks, for sailors cannot abide dirt. So that ended quite happily. But when I chanced to show the Mate some of my drawings of the *Favell* he could not tolerate the blue shadows. 'What about my new white paint?' he demanded. 'This ship ain't blue: she's white.' Notwithstanding that I made every effort to explain how shadows on a white background turned white into blue, he thought otherwise, and failed to see them in that colour.

There is no space available in these present chapters for making further reference to this ship. My object is to show the life of a sailor in the fo'c'sle of that fine barque the *Olivebank*, a rare survival of a class of steel vessels which were built in the eighteen-nineties and fought desperately hard against all-conquering steam navigation. But before it could be possible for me to find her, I must needs travel thousands of miles across the world; which, of course, shows that a sailing vessel nowadays is about as rare as snow in summer. Some readers may consider it mere eccentricity to cross the ocean in a tramp steamer, scanning the horizon and searching ports at the other end of the globe with intent to discover a Europe-bound sailing ship. But those who have yielded themselves to the spell of waves, winds, and canvas will understand full well and sympathise.

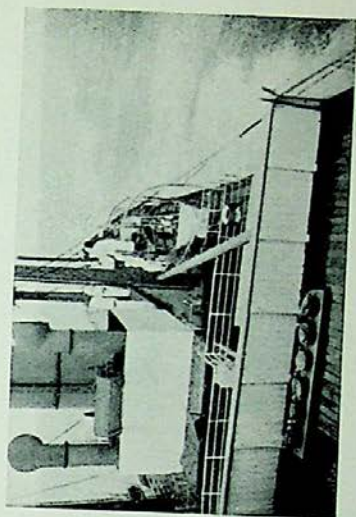
I shall retain a respect and affection for this steamer, because she was the means of providing me with an introduction to an experience which stands out as something quite unforgettable, however long or short life may be. People, accustomed to bestow their attention only on the liner class, fail to appreciate the fascination and romance which to a tramp steamer especially belong. These hardy little merchant ships have a freedom and

sphere of operations far greater than are possible for passenger ships compelled to run regularly by schedule backwards and forwards between specified ports. I need scarcely emphasise that the designation 'tramp' was never meant as a slur on their appearance: for dirt is considered at sea to be a crime, and the filthiest collier out of Cardiff will have rid herself of the last black dust from her decks almost before she lifts to the swell outside. Essentially, a tramp steamer is an ocean nomad. She noses her way to places where her big sisters could not even float. She penetrates to up-country ports, through narrow, winding channels, along rivers between lofty mountains, where cartographers have not thought it worth while to give more than the smallest data. Life aboard these ships is so different, so free, so simple, and so marked by adventure, that the fascination of their voyagings is something very real, and very difficult to describe in mere words. Had the expression not been claimed and used by the politicians, one might in truth say that the tramp steamer accurately represents and illustrates the great 'Freedom of the Seas.'

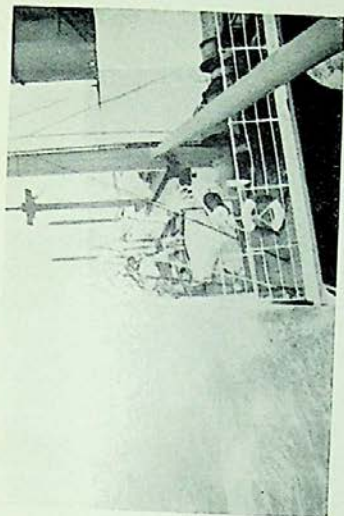
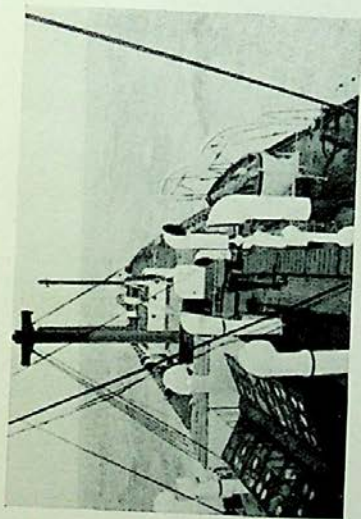
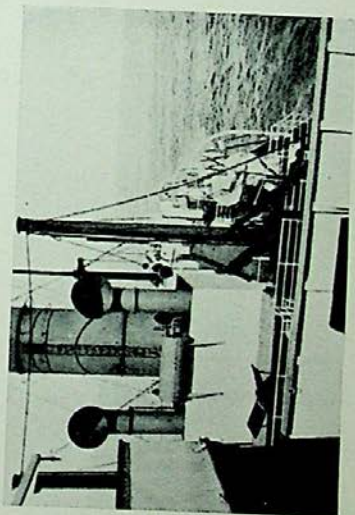
I had thus shipped aboard the S.S. *Tasmania*, and it was not long before I was to learn how unkindly a storm treats these little fellows. One dirty day, for example, off Finisterre in a heavy sea, with the tide against us, we had a merry old time when the steering-gear suddenly broke down, and three hands laboured for dear life at the great wheel aft to keep her from hitting a lee shore. There were anxious moments, too, when compelled to ride out a gale off the Portuguese coast, with one anchor lost, and the engineers standing by ready for steaming her out to sea should the other anchor start dragging. Heavy days and anxious! Days of driving rain and cold discomfort!

But then again emerged the sun, so that we quickly forgot grey skies and revelled in the jolly sunlight, the fair breezes, and the gay pageantry of the heavens. Such excitements and narrow escapes would be strange aboard a liner. But the red-rusted freighters, hard down to their loadlines, their decks awash, with seas breaking green over their fo'c'sle-heads, these are the simple steamers, as they roll southward on their course, which have to know the tricks of wind and sea more intimately than is required of a mail carrier. They are far more closely related to the old sailing ship than is the latter to the liners, because greater reliance is placed on personal ability and less on clever mechanical inventions.

So the outward-bound *Tasmania* rolled gently along southwards through the Atlantic swell, and rounded the Cape of Good Hope in a blaze of southern sunshine. Next came that long and lonely stretch, between South Africa and Western Australia, wherein sailing ships of the past, whilst 'running their Easting,' used to make and break records. We of the tramp steamer were bound for Fremantle, and there was no excessive hurry, the weather continued fair and warm : indeed, as one day succeeded another, life became just one happy, peaceful prolongation of delight. There was no depressing responsibility to condition the plain pleasure of moving through sea and air ; added to which there existed that intimate brotherhood, that whole-hearted hospitality, which both Captain and officers alike permitted me to enjoy. At times, none the less, during those brilliant southern starlit nights, when one found oneself standing apart in the stern of the ship listening to the steady thrashing of the screw, watching the phosphorus breaking in our wake to streams of emerald

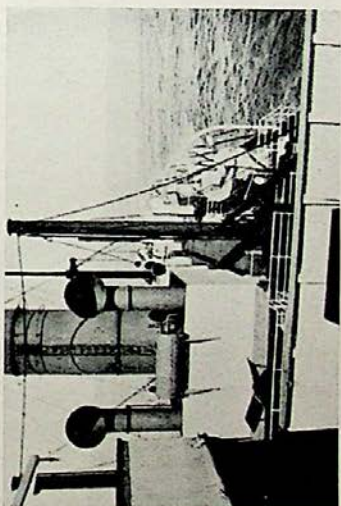
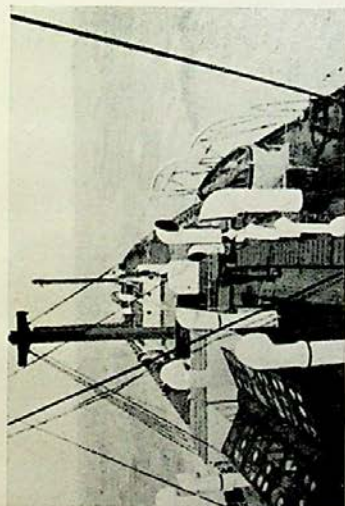
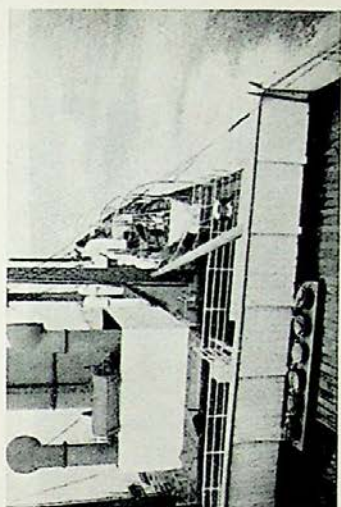
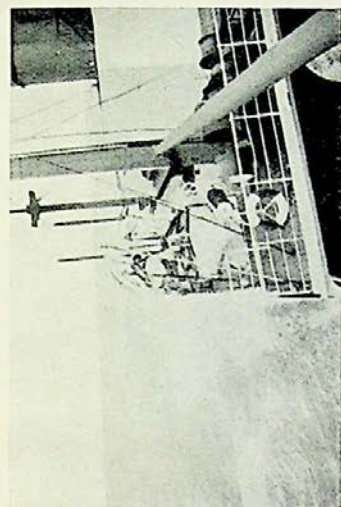


VIEWS TAKEN ABOARD S.S. 'TASMANIA'



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VIEWS TAKEN ABOARD S.S. ' TASMANIA '

light, it was difficult to believe this was not all a mere dream. Life seemed so wonderful, so care-free, so indolently unreal.

Under circumstances such as these how could one readjust the imagination, contemplate a sudden awakening into an existence of violent endurance and hard physical activity which are demanded in a windjammer? The longer one stayed on board the steamer, relishing weeks of restful ease, the more difficult would become the final break. To bid farewell and leave behind such comfortable pleasures, and deliberately choose the severity of a sailing ship, would require a big effort of will, a firm determination to see it through. I perceived that my original quest could be accomplished only by taking a firm grip on myself and forgetting all that the *Tasmania* had ever meant; but amid this mental working it was a little shocking to note the beginnings of doubt, of hesitation. 'Supposing this seeking after a ship of sail should produce nothing at all? Not one possible vessel? Should I not secretly rejoice? Should I not be too thankful of a genuine opportunity for remaining in the *Tasmania*?

Nor was that all.

Throughout this voyage from Europe my messmates had never ceased to chaff me about the windjammer notion. Each day at the saloon table it came up as a fresh and inexhaustible item for conversation, so that Captain and officers kept alive the tense debate which still goes on in every ship of the Seven Seas but will never be finally settled till the end of time. Sail or steam? Which makes the better seafarer to-day? Were the old-time sailing vessel Masters finer fellows than the steamship Skippers of the present age? And so the discussions kept on. But it was not without

interest to observe that those officers who had never served an apprenticeship in sail were inclined to regret this deficiency ; whilst those who had received their training aboard vessels with yards and canvas, sheets and braces, admitted that they had been mighty glad when for the last time they had obeyed the dreaded order, ' Lee fore brace ! '

There was no sort of uncertainty among the older shellbacks. ' What ? Go back to sail again ? Not on your life ! ' was the considered verdict of the Chief Officer. On the other hand the Chief Engineer (a Scot, of course) expressed himself with more cautious judgement. ' Well, I'm verra sorry I've no had the experience of sail. But if it's all true what they tell me of yon old windbags, I'm satisfied to stay where I am.' Then he would turn to me with : ' Still, I wish you joy. Some folk have queer ideas when it's pleasure they're after. *Sailing* ship ? Sooner you than me, mate. Give me steam, and a quick passage. 'S'all I can say ! '

I chipped him by promising that if I managed to get my sailing vessel, and the *Tasmania* had left Australia before us, we'd look out for the *Tasmania* off the Horn, and give them a tow.

That bit of boasting was promptly met.

' You ought to think yourself lucky, m'lad, if you so much as see round the other side of Cape Horn. Let me tell ye this : many's the fine ships, and the fine men, have ended their last hours in those parts. You don't know when you've got a soft job. And that's a fact ! But mark my worrds : Wait till you're down there, wet through day after day, night after night, with nowhere to dry your clothes. *You'll* wish yourself aboard this " palatial liner " again, with a furnace-door to warm your timbers. It's truth I'm telling ye, man.

Now you stay along with us—that's your best line—an' we'll see ye safely home for Christmas.'

And at the end of weeks, as we came to approach Fremantle, the subject received a new impetus.

'What ship're you coming back in?' the Chief Officer one day inquired.

I had to admit that really I didn't yet know.

Whereupon he roared with laughter, and so incontinently, that I demanded to know what he found so amusing.

'Oh—well, it just struck me as something funny,' he confessed. 'Here you've come already twelve thousand miles to try and find a ship that may not be there at all. And if out of the possible half-dozen you may find just one, you'll have the Devil's own job to get a passage. Man alive! But I consider you're putting an unholy trust in chance.'

'Maybe I am. But you wait.'

Fremantle, however, was a great disappointment. There was not a windjammer in the port, no one had seen such a vessel for years, and it was quite certain that these old-timers were not accustomed to call here.

So that was that! From Fremantle we rounded Cape Leeuwin and steamed still further east, and I continued as before, slightly shaken in my faith though not in hope. I had the feeling that my shipmates a little rejoiced at my lack of success, and they kept on demonstrating how slender were my chances of finding a ship.

'Might spot a few old coal-hulks in Adelaide Harbour,' they hinted, 'but that's about as much as you will find.'

Now it so happened that during the early sunlight of a calm January morning the *Tasmania* was crossing

the Spencer Gulf. We were now getting near to Adelaide, the high land at the back had become visible, and already I was keeping a keen look-out, for I had learned that the four-masted *Lawhill*, one of the largest Finnish barques, was about now expected to arrive in that port. Judge of my excitement this hot, clear morning when I thought I could discern the tall form of a sailing ship on the horizon, with a smudge of smoke and a blur that suggested a tug. After fetching my binoculars all doubt was dismissed, for I could make out her topsail and t'gallant yards. She was being towed into Adelaide.

Later in the day we caught up with her and were towed up river together. She berthed at the next wharf ahead of us, and it was not long before I went aboard to have a look. Nor was I the first of the visitors. A crowd of urchins had already taken possession of the poop, and were scrambling with dirty feet over the fresh paint, showing respect neither for Mate nor crew.

So this was the *Lawhill*?

The local journalists had wasted no time either, and were worrying the Captain with questions—mostly idiotic. One representative of the Press was even asking the Mate if the crew would go up the rigging and set sail! You can imagine how popular such a request would be! However, an energetic youngster worked his way up to the fore-truck, and this had to suffice. Personally, I couldn't resist the temptation to go aloft and take a few photographs. I had asked if there was any objection, and received permission, but just as I happened to be getting over the futtock shrouds on the mizzen-top, I heard a man hailing me from the deck. Evidently he was the Captain.

'You not go !' he beckoned me down in his foreign accent. 'You too high already !'

Now the *Lawhill* had double t'gallant sails, yet no royals. In the rough but expressive language of blunt sailors she was described as 'a bald-headed bastard.' She was certainly not handsome : I could see that.

This same day, over dinner, when I mentioned to my shipmates of the tramp steamer that I had been both aboard and aloft our neighbour, the Chief Officer could not withhold his contempt.

'That old box ? You're not going to ship in her ? Never seen an uglier vessel. And she's a little devil in a seaway. How do I know ? Look at that wheel-house aft : that's a sure sign she's a dirty bitch in heavy weather.'

'All right, Chief, I'm not going with her.'

'Still,' reasoned our Captain, 'beggars can't be choosers. Why not take the chance whilst you can ?'

But I refused to be convinced, though they began to accuse me of getting cold feet, prophesying that I should never sign on aboard a windjammer even if I found one. However, this did not upset me, though it had felt a bit odd when I climbed out to the end of *Lawhill's* upper t'gallant yard and I remained there astride, taking my photos, with the quay a long distance below. It was quite a while since I had been that way up, but it was well worth the effort. The view was fine, and the flicker of a breeze became refreshing ; whereas on land it was like living in an oven surrounded by dust. That fierce sunshine and glaring light made conditions for me, at least, very trying.

Port Adelaide lies about five miles from the river mouth, and the country is scarcely attractive. It is just a perfectly level plain, covered with thick ever-

green bushes and scrub. The atmosphere is too dry, so that there is nothing to relieve the hard, brassy light. It makes one's eyes ache, and before long one's head aches likewise. This climate of Southern Australia may suit many people, but for me it was too unsympathetic and untemperamental, and I could never settle here. We in the *Tasmania* used to read with amusement this kind of statement in the daily newspaper:

'The weather over the Southeast of Australia continued fine, except in the extreme South where there were a few clouds during the latter part of the day.'

It seemed to us incredible that a few clouds hovering around the horizon should be considered as bad weather. What *must* the Australians think of our climate?

I was still in the *Tasmania* when she steamed out of harbour, and on Friday night we were off the 'Heads' at the entrance to the landlocked harbour of Melbourne. At midnight we picked up our pilot, but there was a fresh breeze blowing, the weather was overcast, and it was rather cold. Perhaps it was this sudden change, or it might have been the instinct that very shortly I should be saying farewell to my shipmates: at any rate there was something which had created in me a sense of depression and unsettlement. Until now I had been so wonderfully happy, but there was a change impending.

The chances of obtaining a voyage home by sailing ship seemed very remote, and I faced the fact that not more than six or eight of such vessels would be visiting any port of the Australian continent. I had done my best to get in touch with the likely authorities, and was even expecting a telegram from Adelaide, with perhaps a letter or two on the same subject. These should have come aboard with the Melbourne pilot. But nothing

had reached me. Newspapers had been brought off, nevertheless, for our Captain.

It was the latter who now showed me a copy of Melbourne's picture paper, *The Sun*.

'Look! Doesn't that put the wind up you?'

He was pointing to the photograph of a four-masted barque, with hands aloft out on the yards bending sail. There were also some other pictures of the same vessel, whilst underneath was her name—*Olivebank*—and the statement that she was sailing to-morrow for the United Kingdom with a full cargo of wheat. But 'to-morrow' was already 'to-day,' so it were useless to have any hopes in respect of her, and indeed I never allowed my thoughts so to be occupied. I was concerned rather with ideas about a fine sailing ship named the *Viking*, which I believed to be in Melbourne, but if not in Melbourne, then at Sydney. At that hour I was feeling intuitively the *Viking* would be the vessel destined to sail me home, so with that conviction I turned in and slept.

The *Tasmania* had let go anchor in Hobson's Bay, off Williamstown, to await the tug which should take us up river in the morning into the docks. The night was so dark, unpleasant, and rainy, that before turning in I had only casually noticed the riding-light of some ship on our starboard beam, but thought nothing more. Now at 5.30 a.m. I was suddenly awakened by the Chief Officer knocking at my door.

'D'you want to see a really fine sight? Well, then, just step outside a moment.'

The weather had cleared, it was a perfect summer's morning, fresh and with a crimson flush in the sky where the sun was about to rise. Hardly a cable's length away, lying at anchor, was the *Olivebank* with her black hull and very fine lines. I stood in my

pyjamas and began to take in the beauty of her. Had I known last night that she was our neighbour, I should have been up with the first glimmer of light to feast my eyes without being summoned thereto. The intricate network of her rigging and spars, the shape of her graceful hull, all delicately silhouetted against the early morning sky, now presented such a spectacle of beauty as to be unforgettable.

And the more I gazed, the more certain came the conviction that this was the ship for me.

'Now that's a glorious ship,' insisted the Chief Officer. 'Well worth your while to take passage in her.'

But she was sailing that day, so what earthly chance did I possess?

Presently the tug arrived, took us up river, and the *Olivebank* was soon out of sight. I was never in love with Australia, and now was longing to get away. As an artist I found it too blatant and harsh, its cities too new, for any aesthetic appeal. And I was not the least impressed by Melbourne's Victoria Dock. So, the *Tasmania* having berthed alongside, I set off into the city determined to find what I wanted, yet with only the vaguest notion as to how a sailing-ship passage could be obtained.

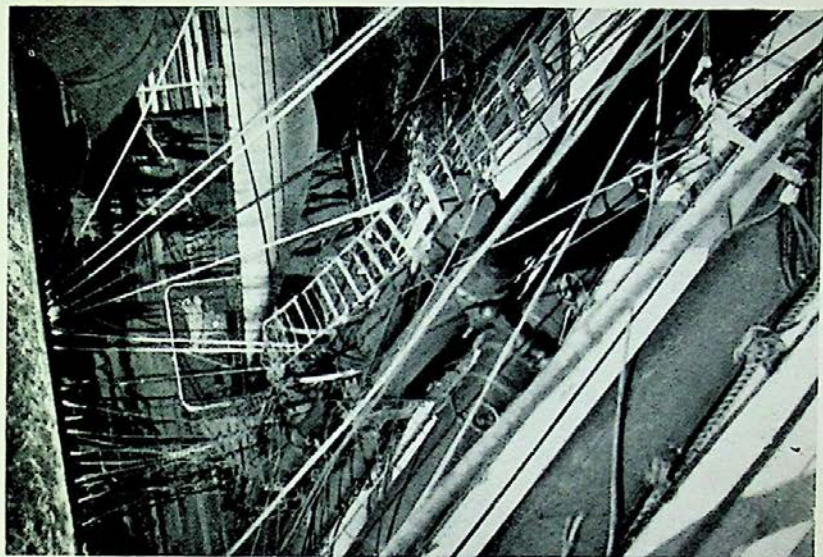
I began by calling on one of the leading shipping agents, but they could give me little information except that the *Viking* had sailed for home, and some of the others already were on their way home also.

Cheerless news!

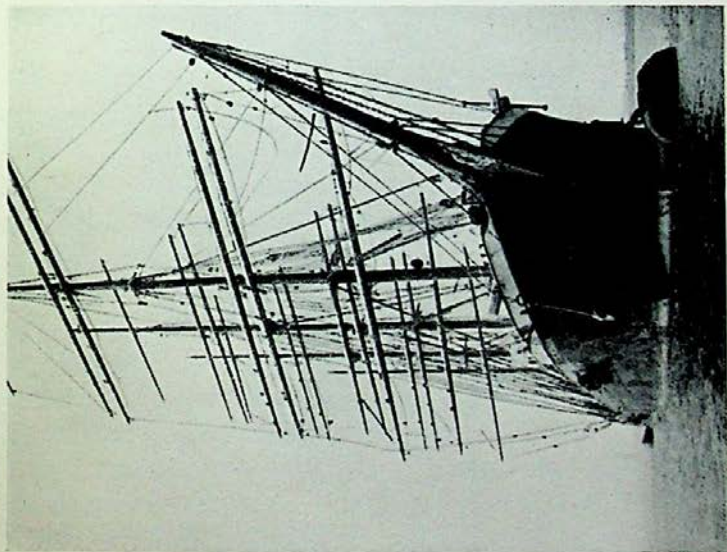
'And who are agents for the *Olivebank*?'

'Why, Darlings' in Little Flinders Street.'

Melbourne admittedly is a fine and large city, but it took me some time going about from one firm of agents



VIEW FROM 'OLIVEBANK'S' MAINMAST-HEAD



'THE INTRICATE NETWORK OF HER RIGGING'
The *Olivebank* brought up

to another. As to 'Little Flinders Street,' I began to think this must be a myth. Having made repeated inquiries, and faithfully followed the directions given, I always found myself in Flinders Lane. It was some little time before my intelligence rose to the fact that Flinders Lane was merely Australian for Little Flinders Street ; but, having found the street, I still failed to locate the agents.

Time was pressing, the *Olivebank* might sail any hour ; it was very hot, dusty and fatiguing, and no one seemed to know where Darlings' office was situated. In that mood I began looking for a telephone booth, where I could turn up the directory and verify the address. After a little trouble I came to such a booth, but it was occupied. The man within had not yet got through, so I waited.

Yes, I waited—and waited—and kept on waiting. Five minutes, ten minutes ! Would he never come out ?

Every minute—every second by now—was most precious. The delay was infuriating, and I had reached a state of great agitation. Look for another telephone box ? It would only waste more time, and doubtless some equally loquacious occupant would be in possession. Nothing for it but to attract the present fellow's attention.

He took not the slightest notice.

In desperation I opened the door and asked if he wasn't having a very long three-pennyworth.

Still he ignored all interruption, and went on with his message, never pausing.

It now became apparent that he was a journalist putting through to his newspaper a hot report ! What a hope for me !

As I still remained there impatient and inactive, all the optimism of early morning gradually faded out of my heart. The *Olivebank* would weigh anchor and be gone. I was feeling strangely alone in this great city, where the routine of life could afford so little consideration for the individual: it was all as ruthless as the glaring brilliance of the Australian sun. Nevertheless, had I only known, this irritating delay was just a most necessary and essential factor towards the attainment of all my desires. Here was another of those minute, insignificant items which mean everything in the determination of our lives: the 'little that means so much,' the subtle chance which alters the whole direction of events.

At last the empty booth . . . the directory . . . Darlings' . . . Flinders Lane.

Back I hurried, and this time found 'John Darling' inscribed on a brass plate at the corner of Flinders Lane, but there was nothing to indicate that this was a commercial firm. Only intuition could tell you this might be an office.

I walked in, and a man seated at a desk inquired my business.

'Good morning! Are you shipping agents?'

'Yes, sir. We do a little business in that line.'

'I believe you're agents for the *Olivebank*?'

'That is so.'

'Has she sailed?'

'Not yet. What can we do for you?'

'I don't want to do business: I simply want to know if I can get a passage.'

'The *Olivebank*?'

'Certainly.'

'She's fixed up with a crew. May interest you to

know that you're about the thousandth man who's asked the same question. I'm afraid it's quite impossible.'

'Perfectly certain?'

'Perfectly!'

'Well, do you mind looking to make sure?'

'It's really quite unnecessary, but if you insist . . .'

'Thank you.'

In a minute he was back.

'Funny thing you should have asked. Seems that two sailors have gone sick. The Captain is a couple of men short.'

'Ah! I should like to join.'

'Only experienced men wanted. What ship were you in last? Can I see your papers?'

'Afraid I have none,' came reluctantly. 'But I could steer.'

The agent seemed very doubtful.

'Then it's no use to continue further,' he decided.

'The Captain needs A.B.s with good discharge-papers to show. Good morning!'

My heart sank as low as my heels, and I turned to leave. It was a bitter disappointment.

But at that precise moment when I was going out through the door, another man walked in.

The agent called me back.

'Oh, just a minute! Here's the Captain himself.'

CHAPTER II

THE 'OLIVEBANK'

'MORNING, Cap'n. Here's a man inquiring about a job,' the agent thus explained me.

We looked each other over. So this was the Master of that striking sailing ship? Another two seconds and we should never have met.

He was a short, stocky type of man, aged (I should imagine) about forty-five, and a Finn. His shore suit ill-fitted his broad shoulders and failed to conceal his colossal strength. He had the sea-blue eyes of a sailor, an iron-grey moustache, and you could find from his weather-bitten complexion, with the crow's-feet at the corners of his eyes, convincing evidence of having spent long years staring to windward. His first finger of the right hand was missing, and at a later date I heard from a seaman, who sailed with him when this Captain was still the *Olivebank's* First Mate, that the accident had occurred on a certain occasion 'at the braces.'

It is easy enough for the slack to get control and go charging through the block, taking a finger or even a hand with it. That was how this tough officer had met with misfortune, but he had hardly stopped to pay attention. He just went aft to the 'Old Man,' who bound up the hand, and within five minutes the hard-case Finn was back at the braces.

'Yes, I was just inquiring about a passage in your ship, Captain,' I now began.

'Is dat zo? I suppose you want to be passenger?'

'How much would that cost?'

'Vell, de charge is ten sheelings a day.'

'And how long are you likely to be at sea?'

'Ah! Dat depends. It is hard to say. Perhaps four months. Perhaps six.'

'Six months?'

'If we have fair wind, we take not such long time.'

'But six months! That means something like £90. Heavens! I couldn't afford that. Supposing I helped to work the ship?'

'Oh, you could do that.'

'In that case, what would be the cost?'

'I should want you to haul on de braces, go aloft, and steer the ship.'

'Yes. Well . . .?'

'In that case I would take you for £40.'

'But won't you take me as a sailor?'

He pondered a moment.

'Been to sea before?'

'Not actually as a sailor.'

'You Inglisman?'

'Yes.'

'How long you been in Australia?'

'I arrived yesterday.'

He laughed.

'Yesterday? And wanting already to go to sea? What have you been doing?'

So I told him I was really an artist; that I wanted to paint 'windjammer life,' and learn all about it ere the last sailing ship disappeared from the face of the seas. He seemed interested, but pointed out that if I signed on as a sailor, I shouldn't have much time for pictures. So I next asked how much money a deck-hand earned.

'You get two pounds a month.'

'That's not much money,' I protested.

'Dat's plenty money.'

'Yes! And plenty hard work, too.'

Still, I wasn't really interested in the financial side: it was not the money I needed, but the experience. And here was my big opportunity—a veritable godsend. Nor could I afford to let it slip.

'All right,' I agreed. 'I'll sign.'

'Den you meet me here at two o'clock dis afternoon? I take you to the Finnish Consul, and sign you on.'

The final decision as to whether I should work my way as a sailor, or pay as a passenger, had not been easy to make. He had suggested I should pay a lump sum of £30 and do a certain amount of work but not stand the regular watches, and the point had been worth consideration. But now it was all settled, and the future determined. At the last chance I had found the right kind of ship, and been accepted. What sort of a skipper to serve under; how he would treat his crew—that was still unknown. This was one of Erikson's famous sailing fleet, and the Captain was older than most of the Masters serving with that flag. But he was the typical Scandinavian seafarer.

Perhaps he was just now all keyed up with the preparations for starting on the long voyage home, but he made no effort to hide a rather nervous concentration as he kept fingering a newspaper on the office counter, and flicked the pages through incessantly. I took a liking to him, felt that he had done me a good turn, realised how extremely lucky I had become, but could not understand why he should have taken me on, whereas so many other men had been turned down.

So, as I left the office, emerged again into the fierce

Australian glare and the bustle of noisy streets, I experienced a happiness so wonderful that all previous depression vanished. Indeed I longed to sing aloud and call every one's attention to the fact that the world really was a very joyous place.

On board the *Tasmania* the news was received with amusement, kindly contempt, and complete lack of sympathy. Had there been a lunatic asylum handy, they might have got me 'certified.' To them it seemed inexplicable that any man could be so obstinate as to spend four months in a sailing ship's fo'c'sle. Their one hope now was that I might change my mind, or at least sign on as a passenger.

'Don't be a bloody fool,' persuaded the Chief Officer, who had spent five years in sail. 'I know what I'm talking about. You take my tip and travel as supercargo.'

The Captain also tendered his advice. To-day he was in the depths of depression, and not in the best of humour. He had hoped to have met his fiancée, who was coming across to Melbourne from New Zealand; and the intention was for the marriage to take place here whilst the *Tasmania* remained in port. But all these happy plans had collapsed. Owing to scarcity of freights, the ship was now going in and out of ports so quickly that it was unprecedented. The *Tasmania* was leaving to-morrow, the Captain's future wife was experiencing heavy weather, and who knew when the couple would meet? So his remarks to me were not altogether uninfluenced by his own bad luck. As I began to pack my things, he would keep coming in and out of my cabin like one who finds it hard to settle.

'The more I think of what you'll be doing for the next few months, the more depressed I feel. I've been

through the fo'c'sle myself, and I know,' he would begin. 'When I try to imagine what's in store for you, I feel quite happy about my own troubles.'

There was genuine distress in his voice, and a simple sincerity in his kindness. From time to time he went into his cabin and returned with little gifts, picture postcards of ships and places, photographs, and other articles which he thought might comfort me. I was deeply touched by it all, and realised how difficult to-morrow it would be to say farewell. The Chief Engineer, likewise, exhibited his concern, but being a man of so few words there was in that formula—'Sooner you than me, mate'—a whole lot of feeling. Therefore amid all this dismal advice I was wondering whether I had not been a little too headstrong; whether I was not running my neck into a dangerous noose. On my way to keep the appointment with the other Captain at Darlings' I was still wondering, still hesitating, scarcely knowing how to decide.

But there, in readiness, was the stocky fellow with the slight limp and the missing finger. We went straight across to the Finnish Consulate, where I signed on as deck-hand at £2 a month. Then, having been told to join the *Olivebank* at 4 o'clock to-morrow afternoon, I was free to go back aboard the *Tasmania*. 'You can take my word,' remarked the latter's Captain, 'that if you do get through, people in England may say, "But how clever!" If you only break your neck, as you properly deserve, they'll only say, "Damn silly fool! What else could he expect?"'

Until again I got to the tramp steamer I did not realise that I had committed an illegal act; to sign on for one ship whilst still on the articles of another is contrary to law and order. On the following day I

was finally 'paid off' from the steamer, receiving a good discharge with 'Balance of wages due—nil.' The *Tasmania* was to sail at noon, and fifteen minutes before this I began making my farewells, each man bidding me good luck in the manner peculiar to his temperament. Over breakfast there had been a furious discussion on the old subject of sail *versus* steam, both the Chief Officer and Chief Engineer supporting my theories.

But now this discussion round the saloon table was suddenly ended, and our association about to be severed for all time. The 'Old Man' gave me a few last words of advice; the Chief Officer shook my hand in a manner indicative of the real sterling character that was his; the Second Officer ran along from his station aft, wringing out the corner of his coat in mock dejection; while the old Engineer just said, 'Gude bye, sir, and I'm sure I wish ye all the best,' before disappearing below to his engines.

I then passed down the gangway and waited on the quayside for the ship to sail. Aboard went the pilot, the gangway was hauled in, whistles sounded from the navigating bridge for'ard, and the Second Officer aft. Then a series of blasts from the siren went echoing over the docks, engines were given a turn, ropes creaked as they took the strain and then splashed into the water when let go. I stood by the bow-rope, the last which held her to land, and for me the last connection between friends.

In the accustomed position at the bows was the Chief Officer.

'Leggo there!' he shouted.

And whipping the end over the bollard I did let go.

As the space between us rapidly increased I saw him wave, and his voice reached me.

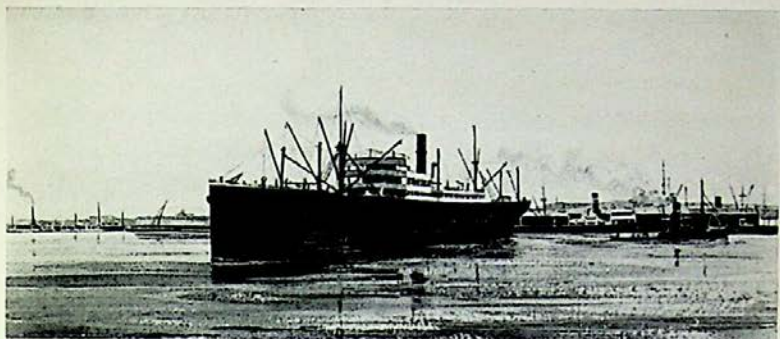
'Don't forget, old son, *one* hand aloft for yourself and *one* for your owners.'

It was his final bit of advice.

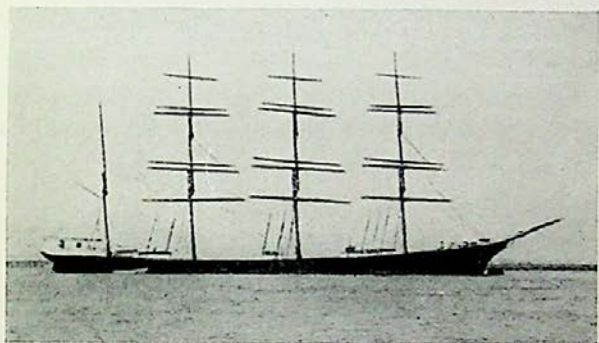
The engine-room telegraph clanged, the throbbing of machinery began, the water astern was churned into liveliness, gradually the steamer's bows swung round, the tug took charge, and away sped my old ship with the Red Ensign fluttering at her stern. I turned round to find myself alone on the quayside. The dock looked empty and friendless, the world seemed a very large place but mighty solitary, and my good messmates had all departed.

It was no good standing there moping ; moreover, I had plenty to do. The *Tasmanians* had begged me to eat all I could before going aboard the windjammer—so sure were they that I should soon starve. So I made my way towards Flinders Street, entered an hotel, went upstairs, and ordered a meal. I was already tired of Australia and looked forward to leaving its traffic and dust. It would be good to feel the motion of a ship beneath my feet once more and breathe the clear sea air. These streets, under a continual cloud of dust ; this sticky atmosphere ; even the Australian beer ; gave me a sense of utter displeasure. It was definitely obvious to me that the sooner I got away the better, so everything now concentrated round the *Olivebank*.

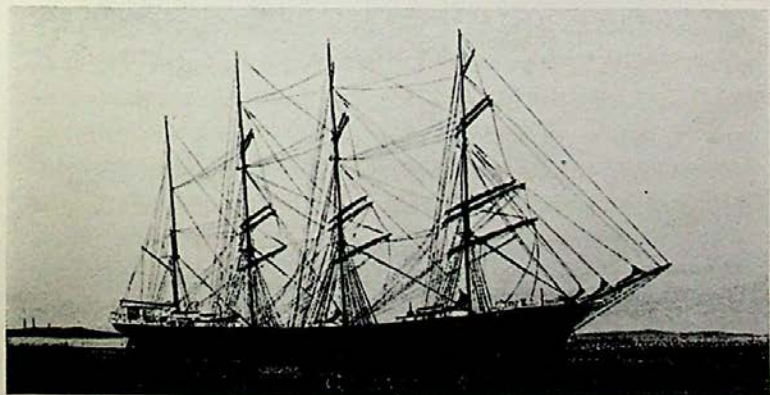
But before joining her I had to make several purchases, and the *Tasmania's* Chief Officer in warning had given me some valuable instructions. Every sailor on coming aboard his new sailing ship is responsible for certain personal effects. He has to supply a tin mug, plate, knife, fork, spoon, and straw-stuffed mattress (otherwise known as a donkey's breakfast). These were duly



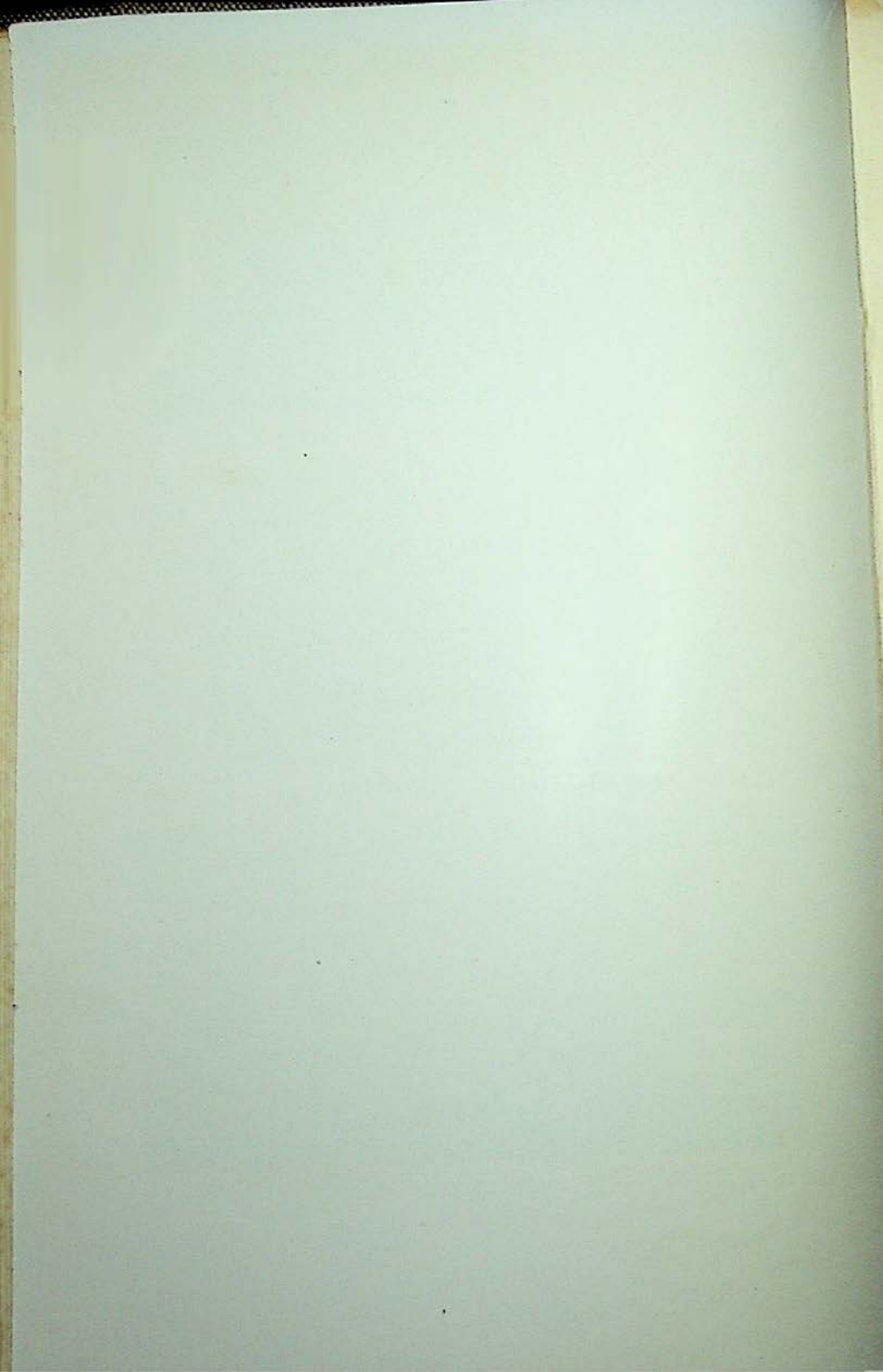
S.S. 'TASMANIA' LEAVING MELBOURNE



FOUR-MASTED BARQUE 'OLIVEBANK'



THE 'OLIVEBANK'



obtained, as also a quantity of sugar, knowing that this item on board would be scarce. I stocked up, further, with a few other articles such as ginger-nuts, chocolates, and a few tins of Nestlé's milk. I might mention by anticipation that my knife and fork were lost the first day out and never seen again; therefore the spoon received such rough wear that only half of it was left by the time I reached the other side of the world. All the little luxuries disappeared within the first week at sea, except the sugar, which (through great care) lasted till the end of the voyage.

In addition to the above, I provided myself with a good supply of films, at the last moment entered a bookshop and purchased a copy of *The Good Companions*. This novel was to serve as a most excellent companion at sea. There was never much time for reading, yet those few delicious moments when I could dip into the pages were most refreshing. I shall always feel grateful to Mr. Priestley for having put such a book into my possession. At a time when I longed for nothing better than to escape from rather sordid surroundings—to gain a glimpse of my own country, home, and friends—these chapters refreshed and invigorated.

Having completed my outfit and provisions, I found my way to Spencer Street station and thus reached Port Melbourne, where I commandeered a porter's barrow and arrived at the jetty. Now the *Olivebank* was lying about a mile out in the anchorage, so I had to charter a motor boat for the sum of ten shillings; and as the shore became more distant, the spars and topsides of the *Olivebank* more tall than before, I began to suffer that nervous sensation in the pit of the stomach such as every boy experiences on going to his first school.

I was entering a community where all would be both new and foreign, and could not expect to find any of my countrymen aboard. As to the life which lay ahead, I had no idea, and wondered greatly as to how I should get on with my shipmates. It was all, surely, to be in violent contrast with that ease of existence which had been mine these last few months. I was now very differently situated, and under stern orders for a big job of work.

I knew nothing of the running of the ship, and quite appreciated there would be rough treatment from officers and crew alike. From all that I had learned, the only fellows who sailed in these windjammers were a tough gang : so it would need one's full courage and much uncomplaining endurance before finding one's own level. During the next months I must sink my personality and become just one of a crowd, sleeping as best I could, going aloft with them, obeying orders smartly, and knowing full well that if I failed there would be trouble aplenty. Instead of those idle days of joyous laughter and leisurely dreaming, there was now ahead one long period of work under the severest conditions with bad food. With these thoughts in my mind the motor boat came alongside the steel hull of the four-masted barque *Olivebank*. Built in 1892 at Glasgow by Mackie & Thomson, she had long since left the British flag and was owned by Captain G. Erikson, being registered at the Finnish port of Mariehamn. Any one who remembers the *Cedarbank*, *Daisybank*, or this *Olivebank* will agree on all of them being remarkably fine vessels. The *Olivebank* measures 326 feet long, 43 feet beam, 24.5 feet depth. Her tonnage is 2818 (registered), 2641 (gross). Therefore you can see she is a big handful to be sail-driven. I looked up and

noticed a row of swarthy ruffians staring down at me over the rail. So this was what I had let myself into? My courage began to wobble, but my mind began to clarify itself.

The officers of the *Tasmania* were right after all.

I must have been perfectly mad to have taken on a job like this.

Nevertheless I had often imagined this stage of the proceedings, and wondered if any one would throw me a line, and whether I should be making unsailorlike knots whilst endeavouring to secure the rope round my sea-chest. I had even pictured the knot carrying away, just as the wretched box containing all my worldly possessions reached mid-air, and then the whole lot would crash into the sea. As a fact, nothing like this happened. Barely had we come alongside than one sailor jumped into the boat, seized the box, whilst another laid hold and hauled it aboard.

'My ruddy aunt!' he exclaimed. 'What the hell's 'e got in 'ere? Feathers?'

So at least there was one of my compatriots among the crew, and that was a pleasant relief, anyway. Clambering up the side, I crossed the rail and jumped on deck. Immediately the crew surrounded me and beset me with a host of questions:

'You Inglisman? Vat ship you on last? Vat pay you get dere? Oh! You passenger? How much you pay? Fife sheeling a day? My voord! Vot you sign here as? Deck-hand? How much pay? Two pound a week? Ah! Two pound a month! Dat's better. Same as us. Dis your first sailing ship? Oh vell—you soon learn. You come wiv us now. Ve show you vere you sleep. Aft here. Dis vay!'

But my compatriot interrupted.

'No : he's to sleep in the fo'c'sle for'ard.¹ Cap'n says so.'

'Yes,' agreed another. 'Dat's right. You come wiv us : we show you. Dis vay, now. You follow me. De for'ard fo'c'sle is better than de one aft ! Not so much vater in bad vedder ! I tink you got plenty clodes in dis chest. No ? Dis vay, den. Dere ve are now. Dis vere you live. Ve put did down hare, for de time : ve soon find you a bunk.'

'Oh, you'll be orl right here,' the young Englishman promised me. 'What's your name ? Muncaster ? And your other ? Oh, Claude ? Well, we all goes by our Christian names here—don't we, 'Enree ? (he turned to a tall, fair fellow by his side ; and then explained to me). 'E comes from Belgium. Usually we calls 'im Belgique. But I'm Jim, meself—Jim Polkinhorn. English I am. Born in Woolwich. Me Dad was chief blacksmith in the Arsenal. I don't want to brag about it, but 'e were "top-notch." We came out to Austrylia when I wos a byby. I've been back once, but me Dad gits better pye out here. Don't like blacksmithin' meself, so I'm goin' to be a sailor. Me Dad says 'twill make a man of me. I'm apprentice 'ere : the only one. And I'm the youngest in the ship, too. Only seventeen. But the Skipper, he took me on 'orl right. Good feller 'e is. Always laughin', an' that. We 'ad 'im up at 'ome reg'lar ; and I reckon 'e'll remember that when we're at sea.'

'Don't you be too sure,' Sherblöm corrected.

I looked and saw a Finn with his arms spread on the table. He was drinking coffee. Now Sherblöm, with

¹ The for'ard fo'c'sle of the *Olivebank* was really the for'ard deck-house. The fo'c'sle (in the strict sense) was not inhabited. The after fo'c'sle was really the after deck-house.

his long fair hair and blue eyes, stood barely five feet in his socks, but he was as strong as a horse. Presently I was to discover that he was the strongest man in the ship, who could fight—if the occasion demanded it. Actually he was a peace-loving, even-tempered individual with a keen sense of humour. Twenty-six years of age, he had been at sea two years and was a fine sailor. The girls ashore all loved him, and called him the 'Midget.'

'No : don't you be too sure,' Sherblöm gave warning. 'Captains can be one man ashore, Yim, and anudder man on de scheep. It's no use for a deck-hand to tink de Captain his friend. Der is nudding like dat in a sailing scheep.'

'E were a grite friend of me Dad, all the sime,' insisted the other.

'Dat make no difference, Yim. You see you do your job !'

'Course I'll do my job ! There's plenty of time in four months to show what a man's made of.'

And with that remark he left the fo'c'sle.

But now I had time to look around me and see what sort of a place this fo'c'sle was. Larger and lighter than I had anticipated, measuring some thirty feet long and twenty wide, it had a door both on starboard and port sides opening on to the deck. At either side was a row of bunks capable of sleeping, in all, twelve men. These bunks were built into the bulkheads, with a board about twelve inches deep on the outside to prevent men from falling out. On loose boards mattresses were spread if a man were lucky enough to own such a comfort. I found that six of these bunks were already occupied.

In these ships the upper bunks are always preferable, for not only are they drier but they have the advantage of getting light through the scuttle. Most of the lower

bunks were stowed with chests, clothes, and other gear. The last adjective you could ever apply to a fo'c'sle would be to say that it looked beautiful. There was not one item entitled to be called eye-pleasing. The bunks were painted chocolate colour, the roof and cross-beams white, and the remainder a sickly green. A noticeable feature was the big skylight, below which on the after side some seafarer at some uncertain date had made a rather wretched picture of a sailing ship at sea.

Two lockers were let into the corners of the after bulkhead and served as wardrobes, whilst on the clear space between these the same seafarer had painted the Finnish coat-of-arms in large size. Below the latter stood a table which carried an ancient gramophone, horn type, and a pile of records. Alongside the table could be seen a sea-chest stuffed to the lid with Scandinavian literature of the cheapest kind : this was the seamen's library ! On the for'ard bulkheads were two large lockers where the fo'c'sle crockery was stored, as well as the bread, sugar, and butter. Beneath the starboard locker was a small tank containing the drinking water, which was replenished daily by one bucketful, and this had to suffice for all the needs of the fo'c'sle.

No : there was not even the minutest relationship between fo'c'sle and the beautiful ; and, indeed, the first impressions were a violent shock to the senses. Down the centre was a bare mess-table with benches at each side, and at the time I entered the last meal had not yet been cleared away. Mugs half-filled with black coffee, dirty plates, crusts, piles of potato-peelings, lay about this table ; but to complete the utter disorder were bits of paper, rags, towels, sea-boots, oilskins, old shirts, and general litter in every stage of neglect.

I sat down on my sea-chest, and began to shift into

sea-going kit. The sooner I changed shore clothes for a suit of dungarees, the better. As I opened my sea-chest, I perceived that one of the crew watched me with interest. His name was Plenard.

'Yes,' he observed. 'I tink it better you should change yourself. Dis place is like a pig-sty surely. But you do not worry yourself. Soon we are at sea, and quickly we have it like new pins. Ver you wish to sleep? Dis is good bunk hare. . . . Ah? But what have you?'

It was my concertina which aroused interest.

'You play dat? But it is good. Play me sometings now. I lofe music.'

So I played him 'Hanging Johnnie,' and sang a few of the verses. How many thousand times this song must have been heard in that same fo'c'sle during the last forty years! How many old shellbacks have come ashore for the last time with it still ringing in their ears! But it was all wasted on Plenard.

'What a funnee song! What the devil is it?'

'Sea shanty! Don't you know it?'

'No, I don't. You know de "Marseillaise"? Ha! Dat's a good tune. Wait one minute! Once again! . . . Tarum-ta, tarum, tadee . . . tarum-tarum, tum-ta-dee. . . . Dat's good, by Jo! Hein?'

He exhibited his delight by jumping up and down, scratching his head, flinging his arms about with excitement, and emitting a curious sound in a high-pitched falsetto.

Suddenly, when this diversion was attaining its climax, there came into the fo'c'sle another Finn, Astrom by name.

'Hi, you! Muncaster? Vell, de Captain wants you and your passport.'

So aft I went, and delivered my passport into the Captain's hands. With it was severed the last link joining me and freedom.

But Captain Lindgren greeted me with a grunt of disapproval, and asked why I was late ; said he had been waiting at the quayside with the ship's gig. I explained that I was unaware it was expected of me to meet him.

'Dat vas de arrangement,' he insisted. 'All right. Go for'rd now.'

I went.

But not till some time afterwards did I discover he had never expected me to turn up at all !

Now it was on my way back to the fo'c'sle that I encountered Jim again. He was leaning on the starboard pin-rail, staring disconsolately shorewards.

'Taking a last look ?'

'Sure ! You know, Claude,' he opened up, 'I'm glad you're English. A man always feels more at home with his own countrymen. Natural, I suppose ! Them fellows—Sherblöm, Plenard, Astrom, even Koskinnen—they're all right ; but somehow they're not the syme. 'Ow old are you ?'

'If you really want to know, I'm twenty-eight.'

'More than ten years older'n me. Reck'n I'm a little young for this gyme. Me Mother didn't like me goin', but me Dad only laughed at 'er. I'd like you to have known me Dad. Sockin' gryte man 'e is. But my word, though, 'e's strict : 'eard me say "damn" once, and gave me an 'idin' on the spot ! An' 'e did, too. Always said I was to 'ave a good eddication, so 'e sent me to collidge. Got on orl right there, too. Maths, trig, geography, 'istory, English : I was top in them all.'

'Fancy ! Top in English ?'

'Sure ! Used to have English three times a week, and I always got top marks.'

'Who taught you, Jim ?'

'Same feller as 'istory.'

'Englishman ?'

'Sure ! I liked 'im.'

'London man ?'

'Reck'n so.'

'Billingsgate ?'

'No. I think 'e told me 'e degraded at Oxford—one of them places.'

'Expect you'll have plenty of opportunities for teaching English during the next few months, Jim.'

He laughed.

'Reck'n I shall, too. P'raps I'll be able to tell you a few words.'

I changed the subject.

'How long have you been aboard ?' I asked.

'Fortnight now.'

'Oh ! Then you'll know all about it ?'

'There's always things a man can learn. That is—if he don't mind bein' told. 'Ave you ever been on a sailing ship before ?'

'Only as a passenger. That was about a year ago. Sailed in the *Favell* from Barrow to Helsingfors.'

'Ever go aloft ?'

'Oh yes : but only for my own pleasure.'

'It's not as bad as they sye. You soon gits used to it. 'Old on when you goes aloft : that's the thing to remember. An' don't tyke 'old of them rungs. Git 'old of the shrouds—these 'ere, see ?' (he demonstrated by climbing up a few feet), 'and don't forgit to keep one 'and for yerself aloft. That's the sailor's maxim : "one for yerself, an' one for the ship."'

'Yes—thanks. I seem to have heard something about that before.'

'So long as you knows, it's orl right. I was only telling you *in cyse*.'

At this moment two men came past, and went for'ard to the grindstone under the fo'c'sle head. It was Jim's opportunity for unburdening himself still more.

'That dark fellow's "Bill": reg'lar one for the drink, and that's Shaw with 'im. 'E's English, too. But I don't care for 'im particl'r. Swears like a trooper. When 'im, and Bill, and Astrom gits together, they're somethin' shameful. If me Dad was to 'ear them once, 'e'd tyke me stryde off the ship. See that feller? 'E's English as well. Cornish! Funny thing, me Mother was Cornish. Born in Truro. They calls 'im Frank. Not much cop! Too slow like.'

'But I rather like the look of Frank. Has he ever been to sea before?'

'No! None of us have.'

The last sentence startled me.

'"None of us have." What the devil d'you mean?'

'None of us English blokes.'

'Then all I can say is, "Thank God there's some one else who knows as little about a sailing ship as I." But tell me—how many are we on board this packet?'

'Twenty-two, counting the steward and cook, Captain Lindgren, and the Mates.'

'How many Mates?'

'Three. They say the Third's a bit dippy, and the Second none too good a sailor. Still—it don't do no good to believe all that people tell you.'

'That's true. Well, s'long. Expect I'll see you again soon.'

I went up on to the fo'c'sle head and, leaning against the capstan, pondered over the news that Jim had just presented. It was the biggest shock, so far. My seamanship knowledge was restricted enough, but I knew that twenty-two all-told was quite insufficient for a four-masted barque of nearly 3000 tons. Twenty-two !

Five of us never served at sea before !

Third Mate 'dippy' !

Cheery outlook for a vessel bound across several oceans via the Horn ! Pretty anxious work ahead, and on us deck-hands would fall the real weight of this sea toil. I could already sense the future. The *Tasmania's* officers had been right every time.

The sun sank down in a golden splendour of perfect weather. A light breeze rose and ruffled the waters of the bay. It seemed to sigh through the rigging.

CHAPTER III

AT SEA

JUST at this hour it was the uncertainty of the future, the suspense, the instability of things which were occupying my thoughts. The daylight failed ; one by one the stars shone out and the shore lights twinkled. A steamer passed, the green reflection of whose starboard light danced merrily on the water. Her propeller was thrashing high out of the water : evidently she was in ballast, and I wondered if she were bound for Melbourne to load a cargo for England. No doubt next week she would be on her way home.

Her voyage would be so certain, so secure : her engineers almost could prophesy the exact number of revolutions that propeller must make. Her Captain knew already the day and the tide on which he expected to dock, after steaming across the world so many thousands of miles.

But how markedly different was the picture for us !

Who could say, even to a month, when or where the *Olivebank* would next let go anchor ? All that any one did know was that we were bound to Queenstown for orders, via the Horn. Bound eastward along the old route, with the old hopes to keep us going through the bitter weather that lay ahead, through the long dark nights of strain and toil. But how many weeks this would mean, or how many thousands of miles would have been cleft before the familiar shores of

home would be seen—no human being could foretell. Both the ship and its score of men were committed to complete uncertainty.

Night had fallen by the time I returned to the fo'c'sle, where a lamp that swung from the ceiling had been lit. Several of the crew were seated round the table writing farewell letters to their friends ashore. The *Olivebank* had been eight months in Australia, unable to get a cargo, and during this interval there had been plenty of time for making intimate acquaintanceship with landspeople. It was now that I saw in the fo'c'sle for the first time more than one fellow who belonged to the vessel, and each had his special characteristics.

First there was Koskinnen (already mentioned), a handsome giant of the Viking type. 'Yim,' he was asking, 'how de hell you spell pleasant? P-L-E-S . . . ?'

'No. P-L-E-A-S-A-N-T.'

'Hell! Vat a bastard of a language de English is!'

Seated next to Koskinnen, likewise writing, was a young Swede in blue blouse and dungarees. You could see that he was a good-looking lad, and his attractive smile displayed white, even teeth. Not so tall as Koskinnen, he was by no means lacking in physical strength. His name was Persson. Over there sat a dark Finn, who had taken a fancy to the English name of Harwood, and so was known. This was the Bo'sun, and next to Harwood was sitting the ship's carpenter, usually known as 'Timberman' in Scandinavian vessels. This nineteen-year-old lad spoke very little English, and had a quite unpronounceable name.

'Vat time do ve take de tug?' shot out the Bo'sun.

'Meednight, de First Mate say,' answered Persson.

'Meednight? My voord! Dat's a fine time to

sail, wid all dese men aboard who know notink. De Skipper is crazy. Who's de new man ?'

'Hellberg,' replied Astrom, who had just entered the fo'c'sle. 'And he looks a queer fish. But he's an A.B. all right.'

'Dat's good,' agreed Koskinnen. 'Ve shall need dem all. Dere,' he continued triumphantly in a different vein, regarding the now finished letter, 'dat's done. Yim? You listen now and see how many mistakes I make.'

Jim obeyed, and the comedy began.

"Dear Mrs. Jackson." (Forbunden! I don't know how you spell dat bastard of a name!)

'J-A-C-K-S-O-N,' supplied Jim from his bunk.

'Det's what I write. "Dis is to say dat I would like to say tank you for de good times I spent. I enjoyed myself eversomuch." (Is dat all one voord?)'

'Three words,' said Jim.

'Satan! Who has a rubber? Yim? Have you a rubber?'

'Arf a mo'. 'Ere y'are. And compasses too.'

'Vot de 'ell are dey? Oh! dem tings. No, I not need dose. Dere now! "... ever so much. I hope you are all well. Please give my love to Daisy, and tell her I will write from England. We are yoost about to sail now. I hope we will have a good passage. Your friend Derek Koskinnen."'

'Dere,' he sighed at the completion of a laborious effort, and folded up the letter. 'Dat's finished. I vill gif it to de Pilot. Are dere any more letters? Gif dem to de Second Mate. Vere's Trotsky? Come! Ve must go and find Trotsky.'

'Trotsky' (otherwise Shaw) was aft at that moment. Between him and Koskinnen (or 'Kosioskoff,' as Shaw

had named him) there had sprung up a keen friendship. Astrom, who completed the trio, had been nicknamed Lenin. Those three found a common ground in their views on Bolshevism, social equality, and the rights of man.

So these were the types of messmates with whom I had thrown in my lot for an indefinite period : and even had I wished, it was too late now to withdraw. The fo'c'sle emptied as every one followed Koskinnen aft, leaving me alone with Plenard. To him I complained of a great hunger.

'Ha ! You feel de stomach vant a fill ? Vell, dere is de bread, and de butter. You can eat. De bread is not so bad : but de butter ? Ugh ! It is vile ! Perhaps you like it ?'

Did I ? I certainly did not.

The bread was passable, but the butter was so near to being cart-grease as to be revolting.

'Den you don't like de butter ?' he laughed. 'You wait. It make you feel like you vomit now, but at sea you soon forget. Dat dish of butter is to last one veek. It will last a fortnight. But after dat it will be eaten up before five days. You see if I am not right.'

A pleasing prospect indeed !

The moments slipped by, till shortly before midnight Astrom came in.

'Hi ! you there,' he shouted. 'De tug's alongside !'

And almost as he spoke two blasts of a whistle sounded from aft.

'Dat's for all hands,' Plenard interpreted. 'We sail !'

Our scene therefore shifted to the deck. It was dark, though still clear with the stars shining, and you could hear a shouted consultation being carried on aft between Captain Lindgren and the tugmaster.

'All right, Cap'n,' the latter was bellowing. 'We'll

use your tow-rope, then. We're now going to lay off, and you can heave up your anchor.'

All perfectly comprehensible.

But for the next half-hour the *Olivebank's* deck was one utter confusion of bustling figures, meaningless noise, loud shouting and vehement swearing. Such is the result of taking a ship to sea at night with a crew largely untrained. To me and the other raw hands totally unfamiliar with the ways of a sailing ship beginning her voyage, nothing was clear save that there existed an impossible jumble out of which I could discover no scheme or method. My recollection of this episode is confused, but I do remember feeling thoroughly useless. Where possible, I hauled on a rope, but in general any effort of mine was without value. I felt more like the circus clown who gets in everybody else's way, and scarcely can avoid tripping himself up. What ropes, or wires, or hawsers, I was hauling—or why—I had no sort of idea. But the most easily remembered item was when I stooped down to lay hold of a wire hawser. Suddenly—as such have a wicked habit of doing—this wire kicked up, caught me on the nose, starting the blood which flowed in streams down my face and neck.

I can call to mind that I thought: 'But this is a windjammer. One expects that sort of thing. Nothing to worry about! Carry on!'

Only two lamps, of the 'hurricane' type, were on deck. Nor was there any other illumination except the glare from the donkey-engine, which chuffed, clattered, and whined in giving power to the capstan. Its funnel on the roof was red-hot, and I felt nervous lest the furious showers of sparks, continually being flung up into the air, should set ship and rigging afire.

Under the fo'c'sle head the capstan pawled and clanked as the cable came in. At last rose a shout from for'ard.

'Anchor's aweigh! Vast heaving, there!'

So the donkey-engine ceased to whine, peacefulness overcame the bustle and din.

Then another voice came out from ahead. It was from the tug-master this time.

'All right there, Cap'n?'

'Yes. Heave away.'

The tug's engine-room telegraph tinkled, there was a blast on her whistle, there came a strain on the tow-rope; and then, silently but gradually, we began to leave Hobson's Bay anchorage. The voyage to Europe had begun!

Those of us who were new hands continued to try taking some intelligent interest in what was going on, though we realised our uselessness. Had it been a daylight start we should still have felt strange to the jobs; but the darkness made us little more than bewildered idlers. At last, when the tangle of ropes was partially cleared, all hands were summoned aft to the poop, and the watches set, in accordance with ancient custom.

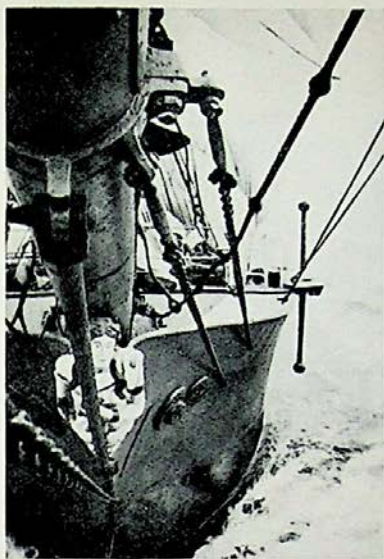
The Starboard Watch consisted of the following: the Captain, Second Mate, Carpenter, Koskinen, Persson, Hellberg, Astrom, Jim, Frank, and myself. In the Port Watch were: the First Mate, Third Mate, Bo'sun, Sherblöm, Extröm, Shaw, Bill, Eyrey, and Plenard.

We were then told it was 'Starboard Watch below!' so back we went to the fo'c'sle, where some excitement manifested itself. For Blomqvist, one of the A.B.s, had either missed the ship by accident, or deserted—most likely the latter. Foreseeing that a voyage in a

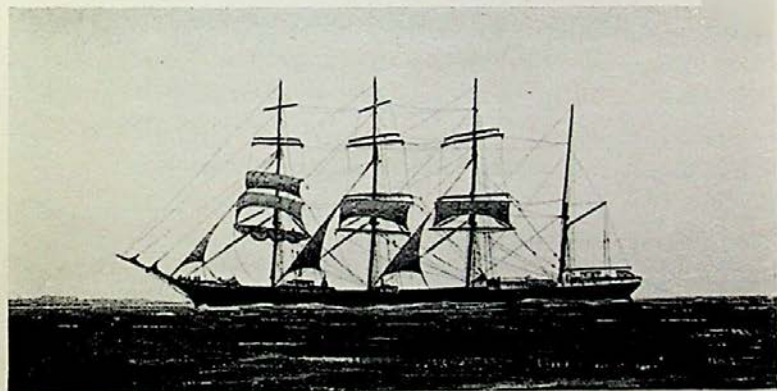
ship so shorthanded would be no picnic, evidently he considered that life would be more comfortable ashore with the society of his girl. But, whilst all very well from his point of view, it was a little rough on us who became more shorthanded than before. Still, with great thoughtfulness, Koskinen collected some of his belongings, made them up into a parcel, and gave it to the Pilot, requesting it to be sent to the Swedish Mission in Melbourne.

The business of the ship now began in earnest. Koskinen, being Captain of the Starboard Watch, set to work immediately and arranged the order of each man's turn at the wheel, pinning up the list on the starboard locker. Sherblöm, Captain of the Port Watch, pinned his on the port locker. By this time it was 2.30 a.m., so it was little use going to sleep for an hour and a half. We therefore lay down on the benches, or in the bunks, as we were, talking of the voyage ahead, the friends we had left behind ; of wine, women, and wages. At eight bells (4 a.m.) we turned out on deck to find a fresh breeze blowing, the stays'ls and lower tops'ls set.

Forthwith we were set to clear braces, and coil ropes on deck, in readiness for bracing yards as our course should change, or for bringing the ship to when we dropped the Pilot outside Melbourne Heads. The business of clearing the braces is one of the commonest jobs aboard a sailing ship. Every time the wind or course of the ship changes, her yards have to be trimmed at a different angle, this being done by ropes called braces rove through blocks. It is impossible to clear the braces, sheets, halyards, down-hauls, buntlines, and so on, until the setting or taking-in of sail has been completed. Thus, when any of these duties are in

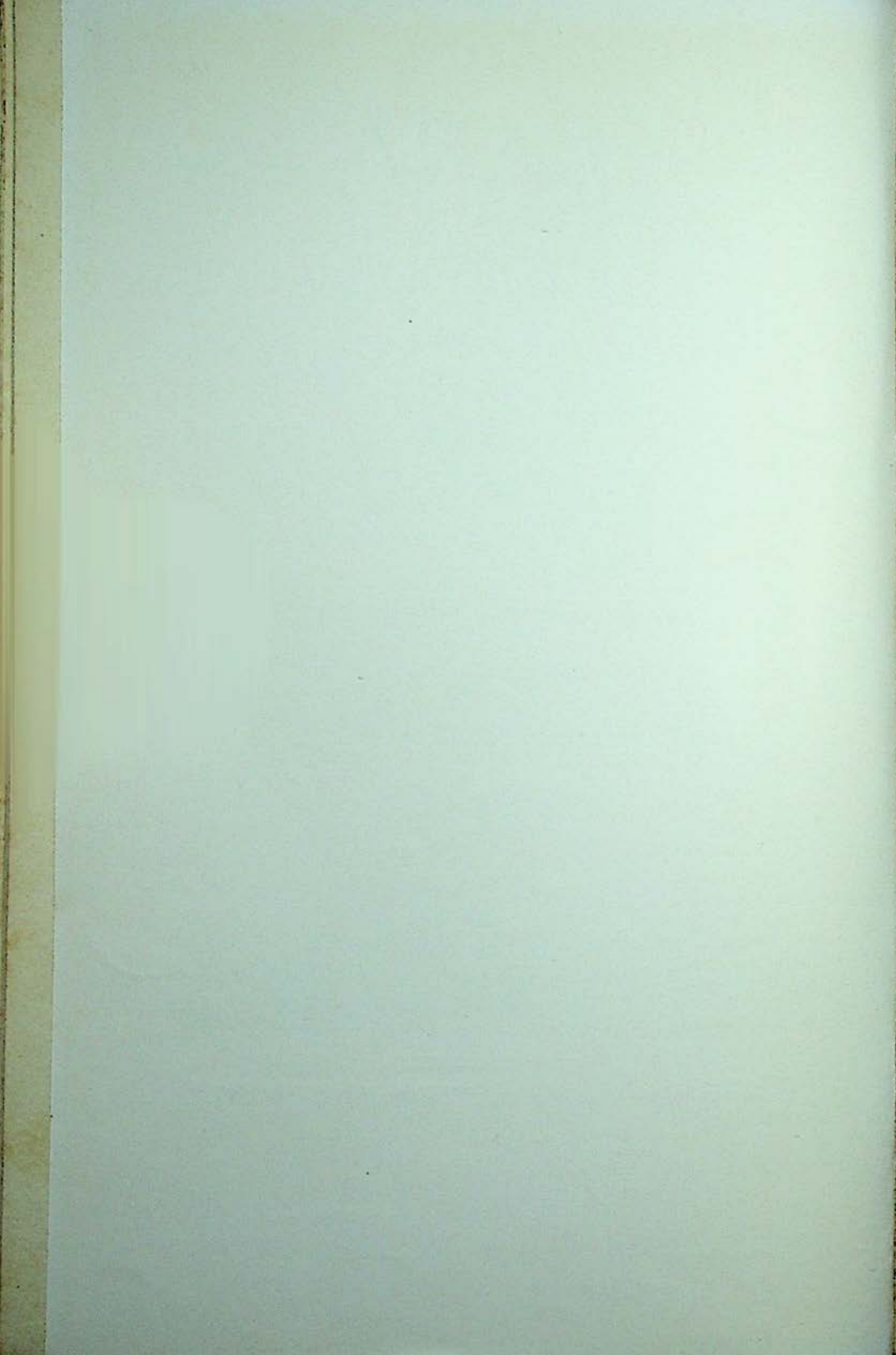


THE 'OLIVEBANK'S' FIGUREHEAD



THE 'OLIVEBANK'

Under staysails, both fore-topsails, main lower topsail, and mizzen lower topsail



progress, the deck becomes one mass of tangled ropes and wires. For the uninitiated, green hands, it appears quite hopeless a task to unravel this terrible tangle. During heavy weather, when big seas come toppling aboard, the ropes get into a serious jumble. During the earliest part of our voyage we inexperienced got into the same mess-up repeatedly. Time and time again were we shown how to make a neat coil on deck, so that the ropes would be free to run out through the blocks like lightning; yet we would stupidly coil them the wrong way about, or clear the wrong end of the brace, therefore causing a bad jam when the yard aloft swung round to the wind.

Astrom was at the wheel from 5 a.m. to 6 a.m., and I was sent to assist, the Captain saying he needed two men. Astrom having been to sea previously in sailing ships, knew well enough how to steer, and I was of little use to him. Standing on the lee side, I occasionally lent him a hand when the *Olivebank* became troublesome. The Pilot strode fore and aft on the poop with the Captain, conversing in a loud voice and a manner which suggested how proud he was to be pilot of the old windbag.

But now and again, he would order:

'Follow the tug. Starb'd a little there. All right! Starb'd again.'

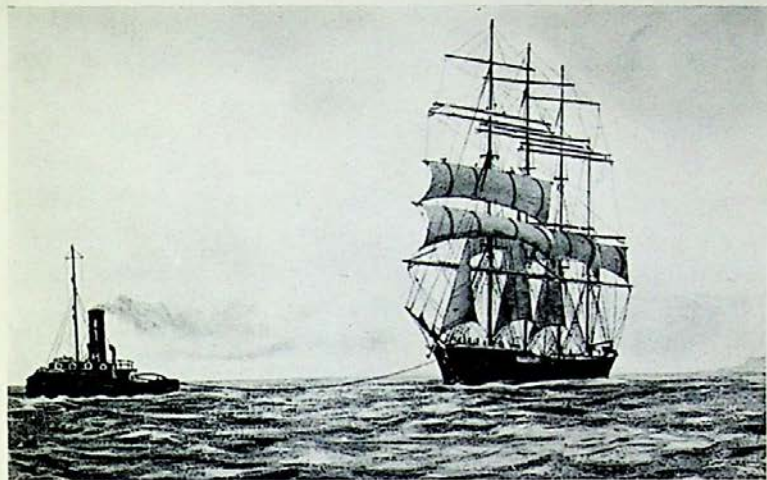
'Starboard it is,' echoed Astrom. (And then, under his breath, the latter added: 'De bastard! And ven did he last steer a sailing ship, I vonder?')

It was difficult to see much from the wheel-house, but I could discern that the land was converging, and we were about to pass through the 'Rip.' This is the name given to the narrow channel between Queenscliff on the western side and Point Nepean on the eastern,

where the vast waters of Port Phillip Bay pour out into the ocean. Naturally, this meeting causes a very strong tide race, and vessels that are not skilfully handled get into serious trouble. But our tug pulled us through, and now we felt the first lift of the Pacific swell. Just as we were passing the lighthouse, a cluster of people could be seen waving to us from the cliff. Captain Lindgren thereupon called Jim, and allowed him to look through the telescope. It was the apprentice's mother, father, and sister. The young man waved back, well knowing that before seeing them again many months would have gone by.

Two miles off the shore we came up with the Pilot boat, so we backed yards, brought the *Olivebank* to, and she lay gently rolling in the swell. Over the side departed the Pilot, away went the tug, and now we squared away, setting a course about ESE. We were bound for Cape Horn, that notorious and lonely, that wild and dreaded, outpost loathed by generations of sailors. We had started out on Friday, January 16. Was there anything to be feared for having defied an old superstition?

One of my first impressions of this initial stage comes back vividly. For hours we seemed to be hauling on ropes and doing nothing else, using up every ounce of strength in our bodies. The *Olivebank* was a heavy ship to work, but even when double watches and all hands were hauling together it was still a considerable labour. There is nothing like rope for finding out the soft spots, and my hands during the leisurely cruise in the *Tasmania* had required no hardening because we lived in an environment of machinery. So to-day my hands quickly became a mass of blisters, and more rough labour was required of them.



'STAYSAILS AND LOWER TOPSAILS SET'

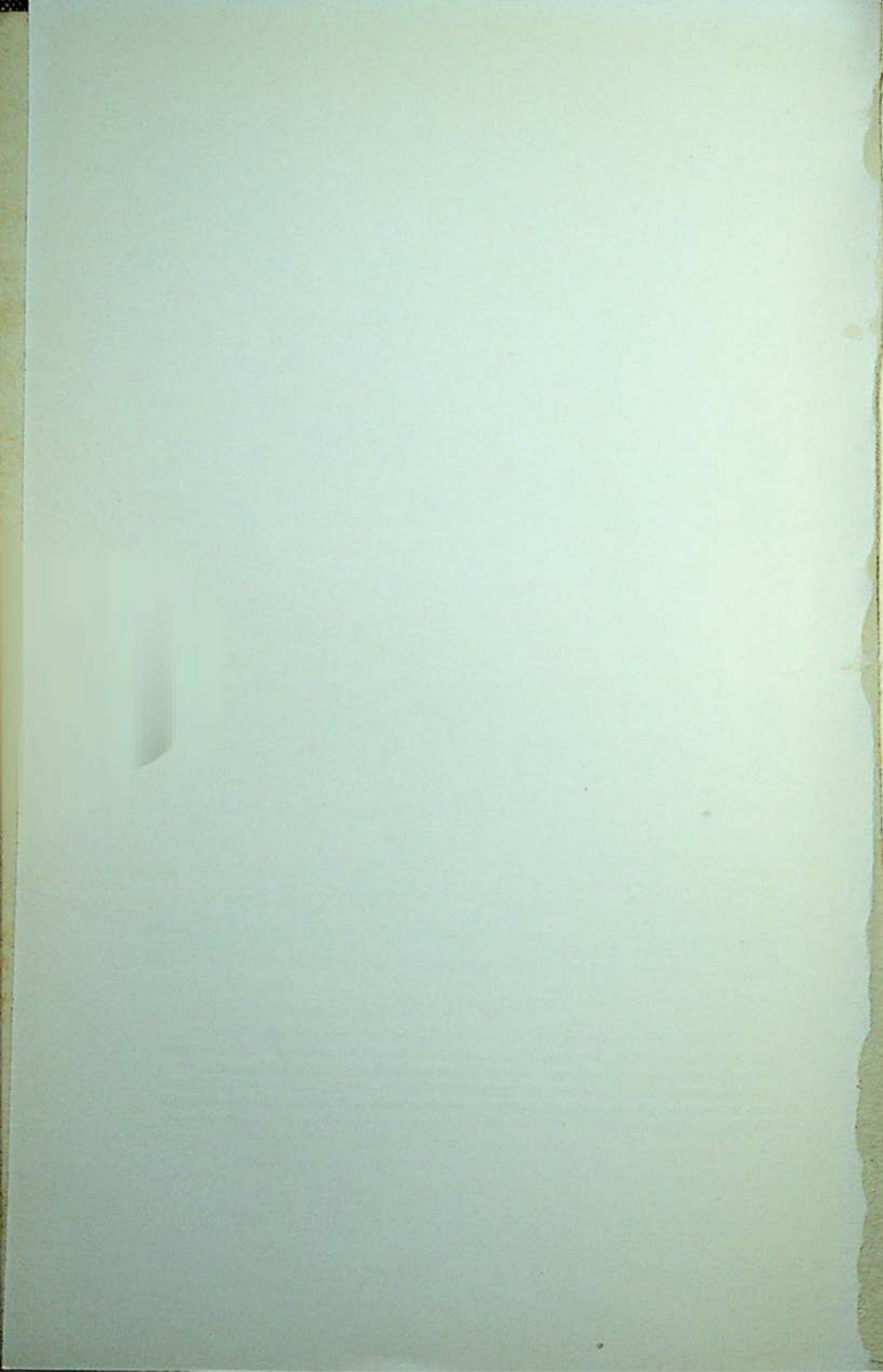
The *Olivebank* being towed out to sea



THE SHIP AND HER SAILS

Reading from left to right the following is the list of spars and sails :—

On the jib-boom : flying jib, outer jib, inner jib, fore-topmast staysail. On the foremast are foresail, lower and upper fore-topsails, lower and upper fore-t'gallant sails, and fore-royal. On the mainmast are mainsail, lower and upper main-topsails, lower and upper main-t'gallants, and main-royal. On the mizzen are cro'jack, double topsails and double t'gallants, and royal. On the jigger-mast is set the spanker with gaff topsail above. Other staysails are also set.



Now came the business of setting sail, and for the first time I was sent aloft, where it was soon apparent that we should be told little and have to find out things for ourselves. Certainly Koskinnen went up with me, and he, laying out on the yard-arm high above the water, showed me how to make up the gaskets, and how to overhaul the buntlines—an unenviable duty which always fell to the deck-hands' lot. I seemed to spend most of the morning up there, getting higher and higher as the day went on. It would have been a trying—almost intolerable—experience for a man who had never previously ventured aloft: you reach not merely nerve-testing heights, but a new world amid spars and a maze of ropes. To-day it seemed as if all else was miles away.

From the deck we could notice the First and Second Mates yelling orders to us. In any case the noise of wind in the rigging made hearing difficult, and so far as I was concerned the orders signified nothing, for the Mates were shouting in Swedish. Even Koskinnen failed to grasp the meaning and had to go all the way down before finding out. When our job aloft was finished we were sent to the fo'c'sle head, where we must needs 'cat head' the anchor—a long and tedious business. Although I tried hard to be intelligent, somehow I always seemed to be hauling on the wrong rope and getting in the way. Now sailing ships have never been famed for the polite conversations of their crews, and the *Olivebank* was maintaining the old tradition. I was sworn at freely and fiercely.

'Hold dis!' some one would bellow. 'No! Dis one. Make it fast now. No! Under. Can't you take a turn yet, damn you? Under dat stay! Take a turn now, you bleedin' bastard. Here—let go. I do it.'

It was all very puzzling, and now with a sudden roll of the ship I staggered, getting my feet foul of something.

'Satan! Vot de hell you stand on dat rope for? Leggo! Here—haul on dis one. No. *Dis* one, for goodness' sake. All right now. Make it fast.'

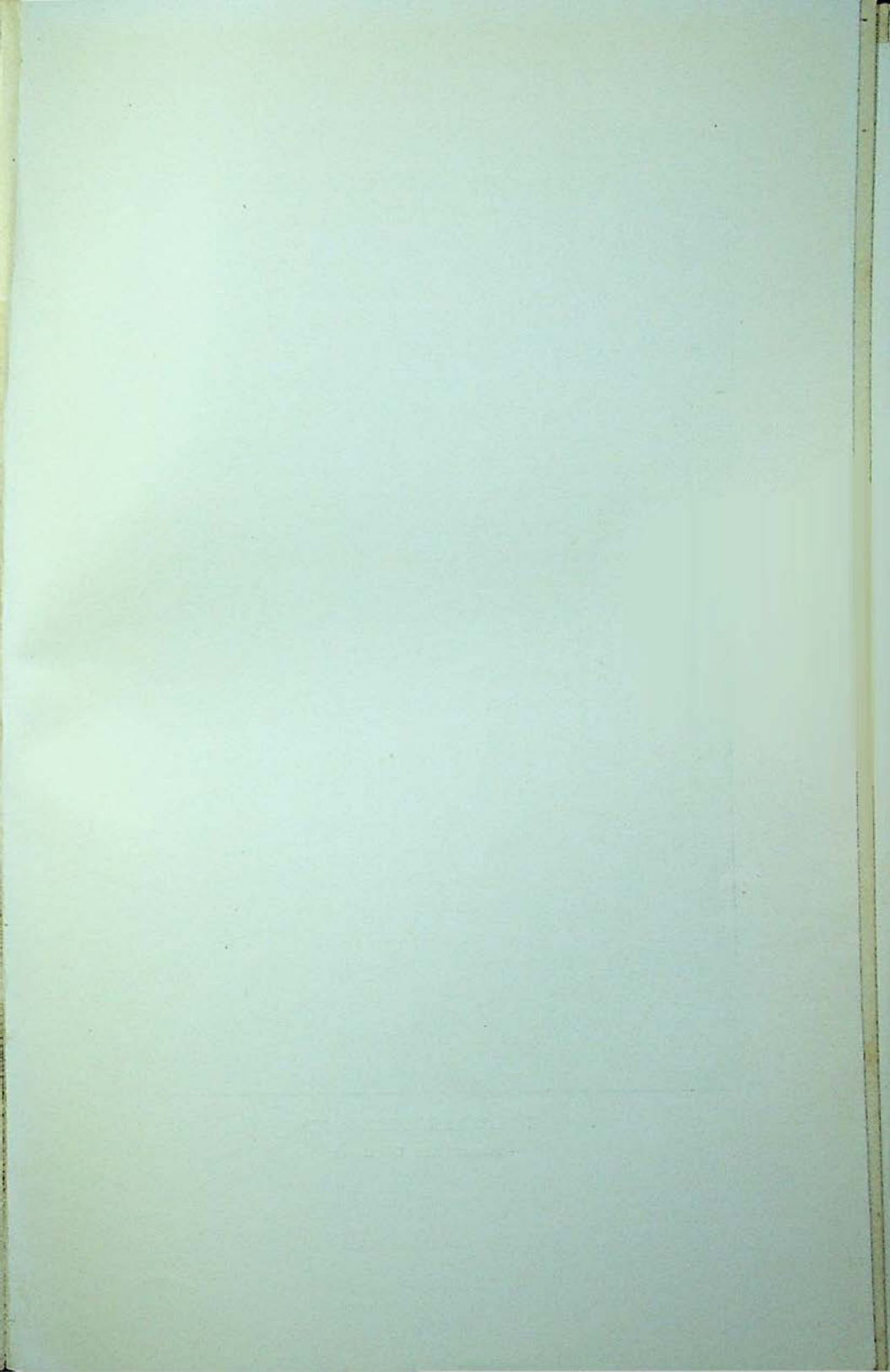
Whilst we were so occupied there came a squall of rain across the sea and hit the ship. Soon all of us were wet to the skin, but there was no thought of taking shelter. At last, when we had secured anchors on their beds with chains, replaced the rails, unrigged tackle and block from the foremast, we were sent to the waist of the ship to clear ropes and coil braces on the pins.

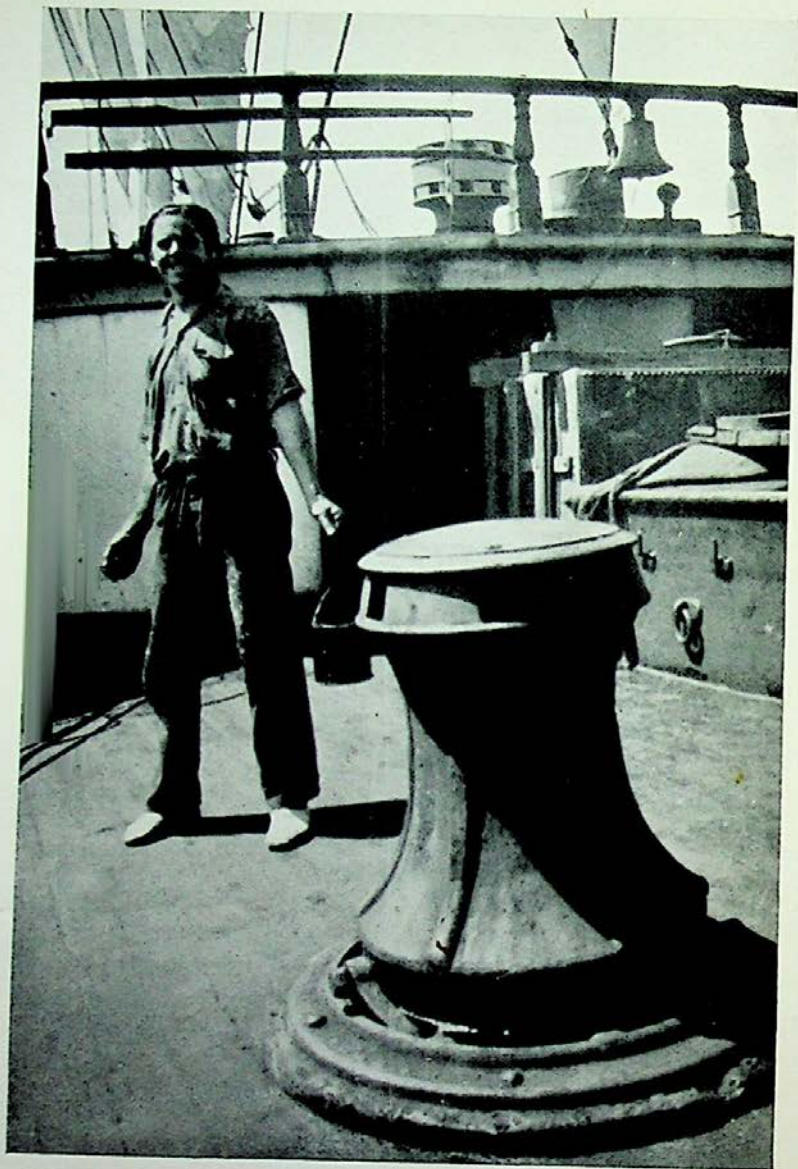
By this time the wind was freshening, and in the grey light the sea appeared a deep green, broken with white crests curling over. Occasionally, when the ship rolled, the water burst in through the storm-gates, and Jim became apprehensive.

'It's gettin' rough,' he overstated the truth. 'I'm beginnin' to feel "crook."'

Certainly he looked a queer colour, but if he was going to feel seasick in such steady weather as this, I wondered how he would suffer when the seas really got up. Frank also looked pretty green, and I'm sure felt it. But he wouldn't admit it. Poor fellows! Life was going to be unkind for these. Shorthanded as we were, no man could be spared. There is little enough sympathy aboard a windjammer for sailors who go seasick, and they would have to do their work or else become highly unpopular with the rest.

So compelling a change, so completely overwhelming, was this newly begun sea life that it had made me forget all else during these few hours. I cannot remember having any breakfast that first morning, or indeed any-





I BECOME A DECK-HAND
Aboard the *Olivebank*

thing to eat at all since the previous day. It all seemed weeks since then, and I guessed it must now be about 4 p.m. when the Second Mate announced that the Starboard Watch could go below. On looking at my time-keeper I was astonished to find it was only 11 a.m., and felt it must have gone wrong. But on inquiring of Jim, I could hardly believe the day was so young. All just now seemed such a strange confusion that I wasn't too clear whether it was our watch below or not. Finally I received assurance that it *was*. In that case when did we go on deck again? I thought it well to find out, so asked Persson who happened to be in the fo'c'sle. And now I learned that aboard a Finnish vessel the watches are arranged differently from the 'four hours on, four hours off' system customary in British ships. The Finns have the following method.

The Watch coming on at two bells in the afternoon (1 p.m.) remains on duty till 7 p.m., but there is a breal at 3.30 p.m. for coffee, which is a very welcome interlude and helps the time to pass more quickly. If the braces need tending, sail to be set or taken in, this obviously has to be done. The Watch below is roused at 6.30 p.m. and given half an hour in which to dress and have their tea before going on deck. From 7 p.m. till 12 p.m. this new Watch stays on duty and then goes below until 4 a.m. From then to 8 a.m. they will be on deck, but again go below until 1 p.m.

Thus the Watches are changing continually, and no Watch will have the same period for two days running. That object, of course, is universal in all ships, but the British custom is to attain this by means of the dog watches—4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Personally, I am in favour of the Finnish method which dispenses with these dog watches; and, whilst it is true

that the 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. period means one long unbroken watch, it is compensated by having six hours below during the afternoon. There is thus an opportunity for men to have a good sleep, get their washing done, mend their clothes, or do any other odd jobs.

A sailor never has the privilege of a whole night's rest. Scarcely has he fallen asleep than he is awakened by the 'policeman' of the other Watch calling upon him to 'Rise up! Rise up! Show a leg! Rise and shine!' He must tumble out of a warm bunk and hurry on deck. When he has a meal before going on duty, he is allowed half an hour's grace, but even this is little enough time, especially in bad weather when there are oilskins to be donned, sea-boots to be pulled on, and other heavy gear to be persuaded around one's person. A sailor tries hard to keep dry, but seldom succeeds. However carefully he ties up his wrists and trouser legs with rope yarn, the water cannot be kept out for more than a few minutes.

Such facts we should learn soon enough in the *Olivebank*. At present it was sufficient to understand that we should be required on deck again at 1 p.m., at midnight, and from 8 a.m. till 1 p.m. on Sunday. Having mastered the arrangement of the watches, I was now to learn that Saturday afternoons were usually free. Therefore, if one's watch below chanced to be on Saturday morning, it meant that after 8 a.m. one was practically at liberty until Monday morning, there being little to do beyond the actual sailing of the ship. Of course there was still one's trick at the wheel, one's turn of being 'policeman,' and an hour's look-out duty on the fo'c'sle head during the night. Apart, however, from these tasks, the crew in a Finnish ship can normally call the time their own at the week-end. Thus Satur-





THE 'OLIVEBANK' BECALMED

days and Sundays were always looked forward to with the hope that winds would be fair and steady, therefore calling for no work at the braces or aloft.

Excellent idea ! But it is only when in the sphere of the Trade Winds that such liberty can be relied upon. In the wild Pacific southern latitudes, or in the Atlantic, nature has no respect for the sailor's wishes. Wind and weather in those parts are as restless as a feverish child, as changeable as the moon ; tormenting, harassing, bruising, and bullying in a manner more tyrannical and unrelenting than the worst taskmaster ever demanded. We in the *Olivebank* could scarcely expect this first Saturday afternoon to be our own, for immediately after leaving port there is so much clearing up to be done. Nevertheless this concession was granted us, and very glad we were to have a spell of freedom.

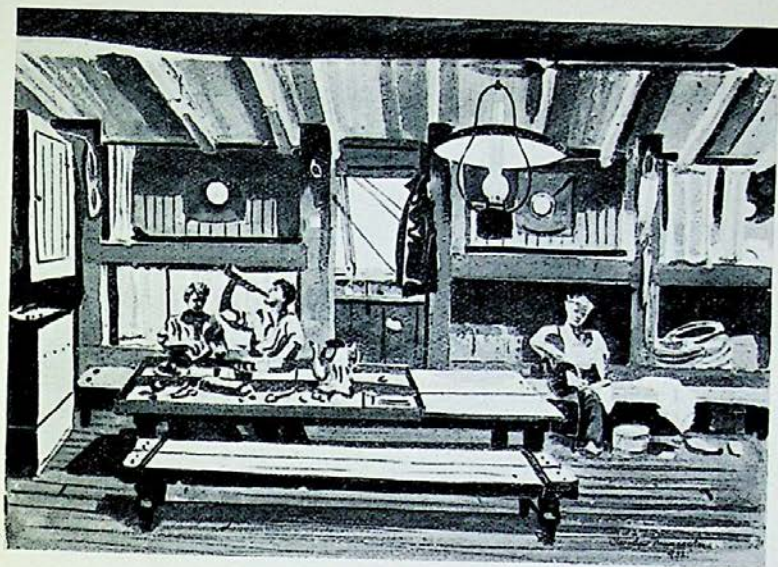
But no man in the ship received the news with such happiness as Jim, who by dinner-time had begun to suffer the full agonies of seasickness. There he lay in his bunk moaning and cursing, informing all and sundry that he felt 'so crook.' We advised him to eat, but he felt little inclination for the 'salt horse' served us. Indeed one needed to be fit and really hungry to relish that flavour. Its tough, gristly, red meat (with a strong back taste) rather suggested that before being salted down for sailors' use the 'horse' had been led to the slaughter-house, only many years ago : yet one can accustom oneself to most things. The healthiness of our appetites, the sea air, the absence of any better food, soon helped us to swallow that which on shore would have made us vomit.

And he who comes to sea under sail must not be too sensitive regarding the manners in a fo'c'sle. It is not here that you will find white cloths, polished silver,

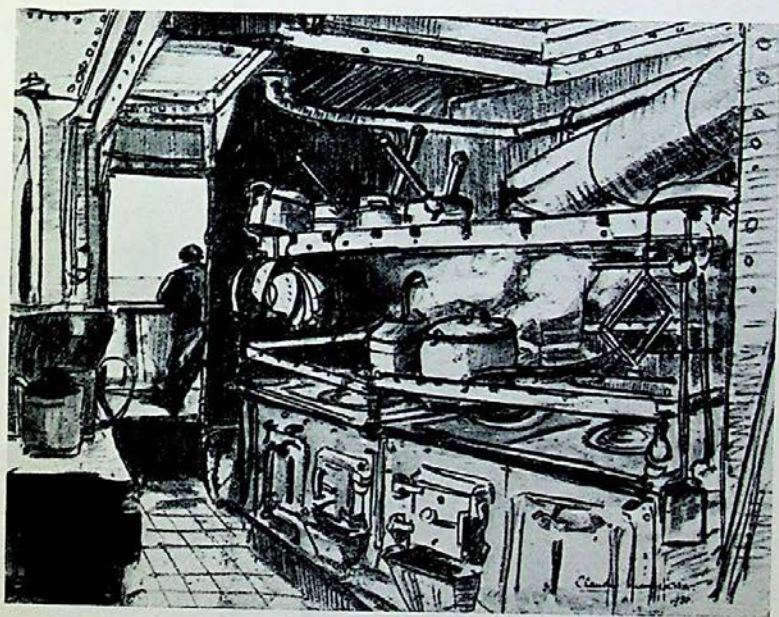
or a clean plate for each course : in truth, there is difficulty in distinguishing between one course and any other. Placed on the centre of the table is a common mess-tin, from which men grab their share—usually with no other fork than their two fingers. The custom is for the A.B.s to have their pick of the dish, and for the juniors to take what remains. In our fo'c'sle there were only four of the Starboard Watch, Koskinnen and Persson sitting at either side of the table, whilst Jim and myself sat below. The same plate does for everything : fruit soup may follow fish, or semolina pudding may find traces of curry-and-rice still clinging, but it is all the same.

At nearly every meal were provided potatoes boiled in their skins, but for the most part they were black and diseased. These hard-case Northmen with their rough habits made no hesitation in spitting out peelings or pips on to table or floor ; so that by the time both watches had finished a meal, the fo'c'sle was as filthy as the stables of Augeas. Men coming off watch ate whilst the food was hot, without waiting to wash their hands that often were foul with grease, paint, or red rust. If they washed at all, it was afterwards in their tins of water, which had been warming on the galley fire whilst the meal was in progress. Each man was allowed two syrup-tins of fresh water to perform his ablutions at the end of the day. Now this allowance was adhered to strictly, so men would save the same water for days, using it again and again. Thus at the end of the week they became entitled to a large supply with which to wash their clothes.

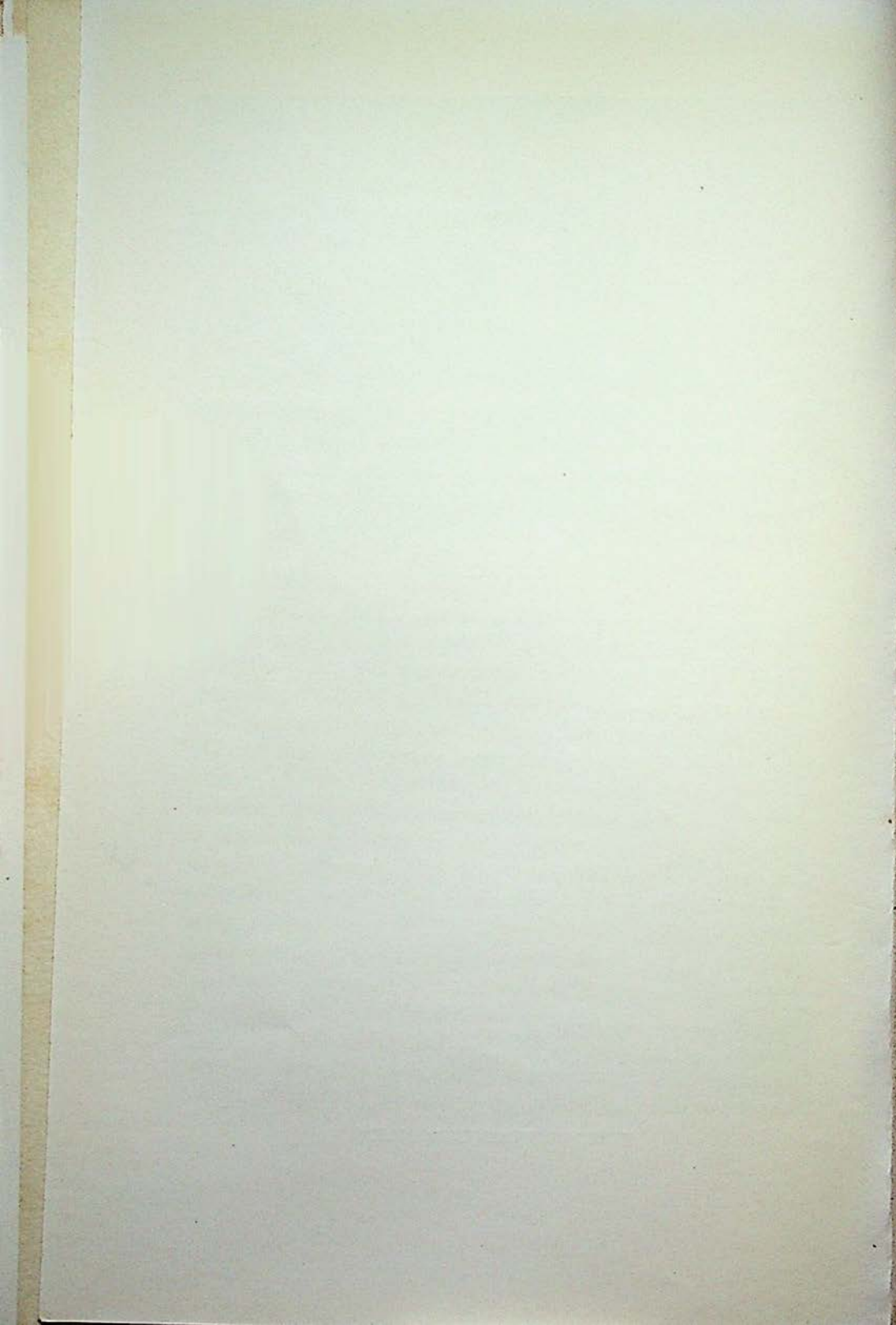
Jim being incapable, I was informed by Koskinnen that I was fo'c'sle man for the week. The fo'c'sle man, or 'Peggy' as he is called aboard British ships, is,



OUR FO'C'SLE



THE 'OLIVEBANK'S' GALLEY



during his watch, responsible for washing up the plates after meals ; and this was a job I rather liked, since we were allowed an hour during which also the table had to be scrubbed and the floor cleaned. If the weather was at all reasonable, this could be done in thirty minutes, so that a man had the rest of the time for reading or doing as he liked ; though he was always careful to keep inside the fo'c'sle beyond sight of the Mate.

All washing up was, of course, done in sea-water, which was obtained by putting a bucket over the side ; and the fo'c'sle man was responsible for seeing that this water was put on the galley fire at 'one bell' when the other watch was called. Being blessed with an absurdly short memory, I often failed to remember this duty, thus incurring the displeasure of the fo'c'sle man in the other watch. In heavy weather matters were not easy. Even with the aid of the 'fiddle,' plates and mugs would go sliding off the table to disappear under lockers or bunks. Seldom was the water really hot, and often we would be called away to take in sail only to find on our return that the water was stone cold—perhaps even upset.

The fo'c'sle man being responsible also for carrying food from galley to fo'c'sle, would sometimes be caught *en route* by a heavy sea ; but if he lost one particle of grub, or spilled one drop of coffee, there would be trouble in store. By 5.30 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. he must see that coffee is on the table, but he was also responsible for the sugar and butter rations. Saturday morning was always the day when both fo'c'sles received a thorough good clean by the respective fo'c'sle man. Having filled two barrels with sea-water, he set to work and scrubbed table, floor, benches with caustic soda and

sand. Lockers having been thoroughly swept, were given clean sheets of paper.

The Mate and Koskinnen were careful that this cleaning up was done with thoroughness. My opposite number in the for'ard fo'c'sle was Jim, so that we worked in alternate weeks. In the fo'c'sle aft the job was done by Astrom and Frank ; other men being selected for the Port Watch. I did not envy those who had to keep clean the after fo'c'sle, which was much smaller and damper than ours and never looked any the better for the labour expended. In a separate room of this after fo'c'sle lived the Bo'sun and Carpenter, where they had meals by themselves, and ordinarily would have worked from six in the morning till six at night, standing no watches. But in our present short-handed condition their services were badly required, and they kept a watch with the rest. It was only when we were in the Trades that they did day-work, but the Carpenter then complained that he preferred to stand his watch, as this was less laborious.

For the reason that normally they are day-men and do not work in watches, the Carpenter and Bo'sun are termed the ship's 'idlers' : so, also, are the Steward, Cook, and Sailmaker. To my mind this is a misnomer, since four of these five have to work just as hard as any one else, if not harder. In the *Olivebank* we carried no Sailmaker, so the Bo'sun and Koskinnen deputised for him. I think perhaps the Steward had the softest job of any in the ship, but I never envied the Cook, who, apart from being the butt of every one's derision, continually toiled under most adverse conditions. Having regard to the limited materials at his disposal, I consider he made a praiseworthy performance. If the soup lacked sugar or fruit, he could scarcely be blamed for

having kept within his allowed ration : he had to manage as best he could. Often he would be working waist deep in water, and just when he had got his fire nicely burning with the grub boiling, over would swoop a ugly sea into the galley, putting out fire, washing pots and pans on to the deck, and generally causing ruination.

Many a man would have been discouraged for good but time after time he would set to again, have the fire going once more, and then meet with a similar disaster yet I cannot once remember that he failed to supply us with something hot that was not ready to the minute. Nominally, it was from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. that he worked actually, the period was often longer. It was the same for him on Saturdays and Sundays, for men continued to be hungry and expected to be fed. If he was washed out during heavy weather, in the tropics his galley became such a furnace that he was all but roasted alive. That man certainly was less an idler than a hero. On him depended largely the temper of the crew, for however cold and miserable a sailor may be, let the cook supply something hot and the sailor becomes completely transformed.

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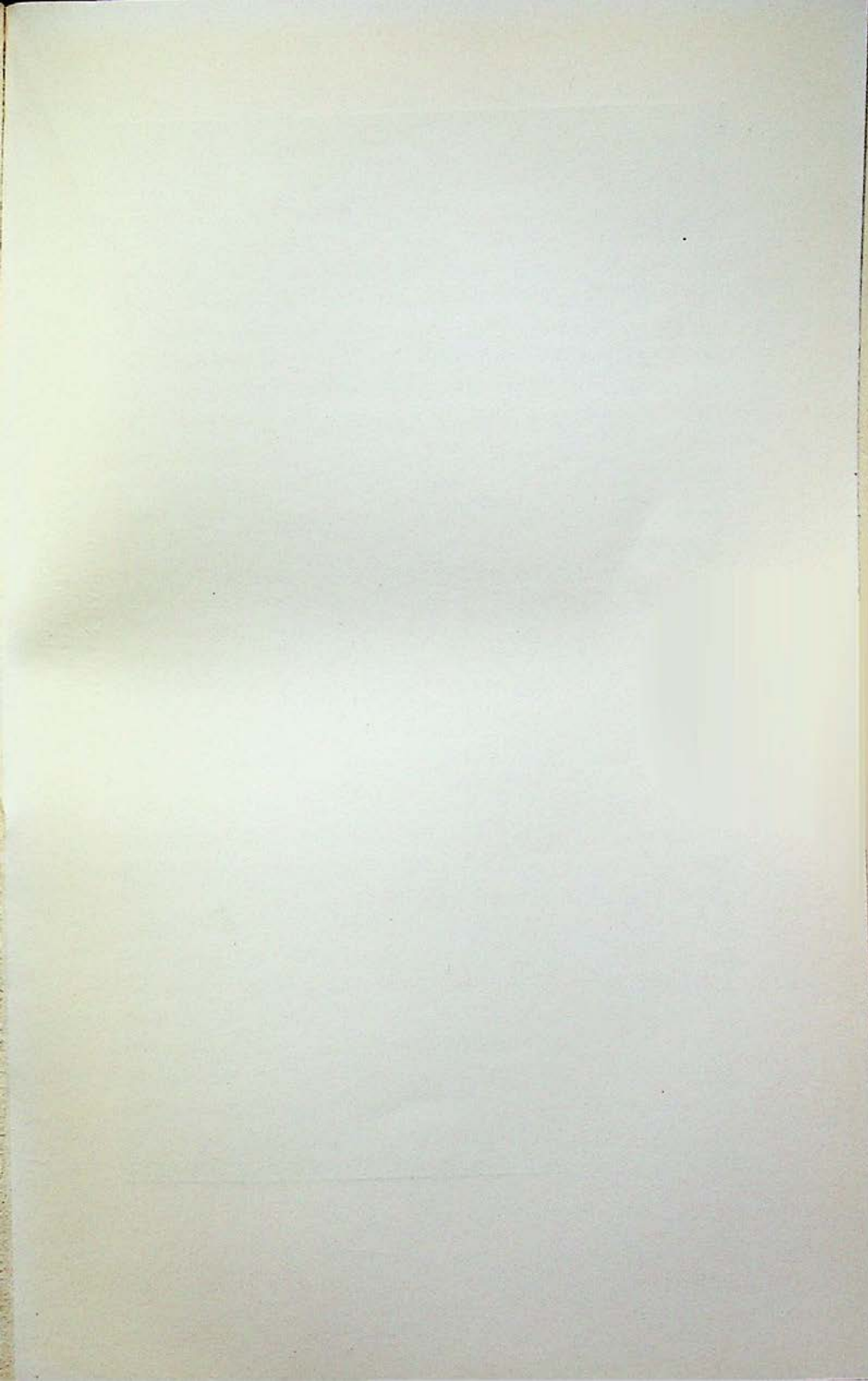
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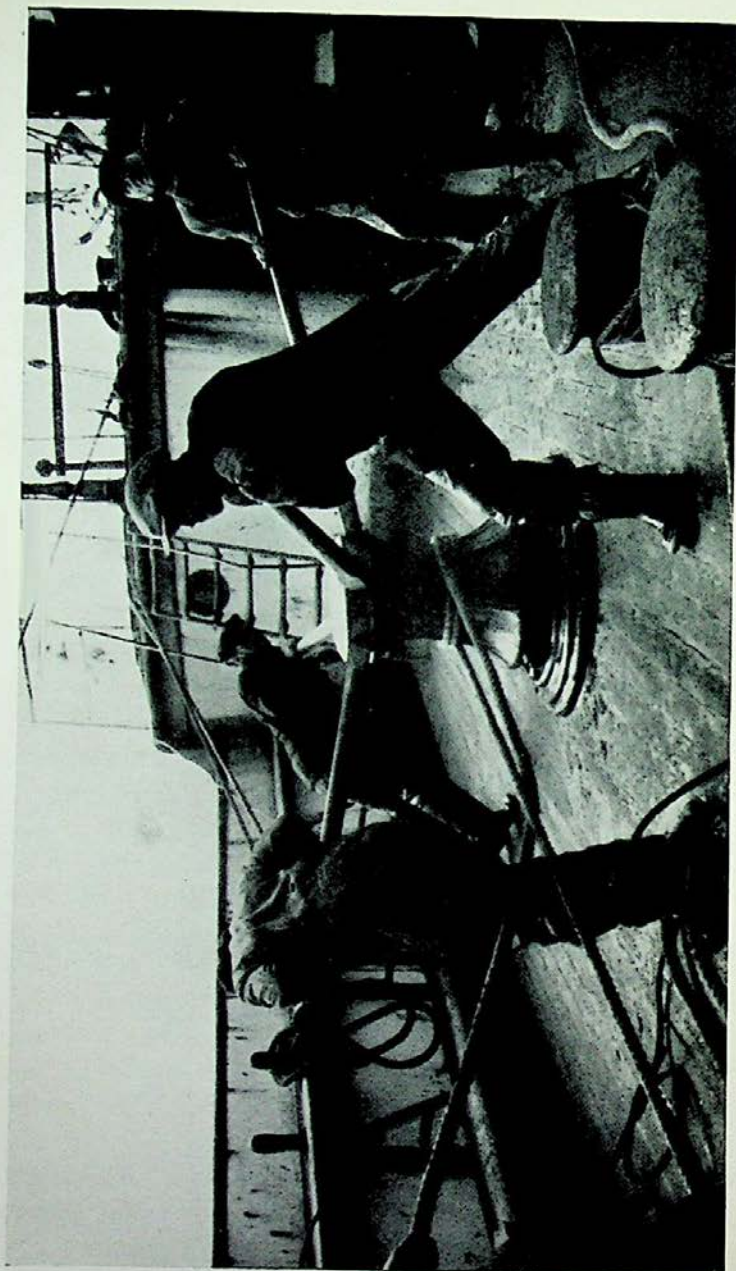
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CHAPTER IV

EASTWARD BOUND

THE distance from Melbourne to the English Channel is about 14,000 miles, and the average time which a sailing ship takes varies from 80 to 100 days under normal circumstances. Mr. Basil Lubbock in *The Last of the Windjammers* says that the *Cedarbank* and *Olivebank* were once the pride of the Bank Line and had the reputation of fast sailers. In 1900 the *Olivebank* came home from Melbourne to Falmouth in 87 days, but of course at that date she was in her prime. Thirteen years later she was sold to the Norwegians, who changed her name to *Caledonia*, but in 1924 Captain G. Erikson bought her, as already mentioned, and gave her back the original name. In the following year she sailed from Melbourne to Queens-town in 113 days. Thus the period had passed for making records, and we could under no circumstances in this year 1931 with such an inadequate crew expect to make a quick passage. Nevertheless, the *Olivebank* was a vessel of which to be proud. During her forty years of existence under three national flags she had served her owners well and survived changes. Twenty years before I was destined to see her she had got on fire whilst in port, been scuttled, raised, repaired, and again fitted out for sea. Not long before I joined, she spent a period as a Lithuanian training ship for cadets, and then went back into trade. To-day her cargo con-





THE CAPSTAN MANNED

Setting the fore upper t'gallant sail. The men, reading from left to right, are 'Belgique,' Bo'sun, Third Mate, and 'Bill.'

sisted of 4500 tons of grain 'for the United Kingdom by way of Cape Horn.'

Now the distance from Melbourne to Cape Horn is just under 6000 miles, and it is almost another 7000 miles thence to the Azores, with more than 1000 miles from those islands to the English Channel. But it is the first section of the voyage that is the worst. The sailing-ship route from Melbourne passes south of New Zealand, and it is a lonely track where, however, winds of a more or less westerly type may be expected. It has been found by many generations of experience that between Lat. 47° and 50° there is a belt which is preferable to any other as likely to provide less heavy seas, more regular winds, and an absence of ice. But there is no absolute certainty about such statements, for the ocean is too wild and free, too subject to moods. It refuses to abide strictly by any schedule, and even the most reliable of Trade Winds are known to vary.

Among the mysteries of the sea are those unexplained disappearances of sailing ships which have left absolutely no trace, no bit of evidence telling the cause of their disaster. In many a case the general opinion among mariners is that such vessels struck an iceberg and so foundered with all hands. Now the possibility of the *Olivebank* encountering this danger was not so remote as many might suppose. A reference to the chart shows that during the period January-March the ice-line from the Antarctic comes surprisingly near to the SW. end of Tasmania, whilst after a ship has left New Zealand well astern there is a possibility of meeting ice in the South Pacific even north of Cape Horn's latitude.

On our first Sunday morning we loosed the *Olivebank's* t'gallants to take all advantage of the fair wind, passed Bass Island at tea-time, and next day set mainsail

and spanker. Of course I began in my ignorance to loose the wrong sail, and was called a bloody fool in consequence. During the afternoon I went aft to take my trick at the wheel, Koskinnen accompanying me to give instructions. We mounted the poop by the lee-side ladder, for this is the custom of the sea. Should a sailor go up by the weather side, he would meet with an unpleasant ticking-off from the Captain or Mate for an unwarrantable breach of sea etiquette.

The steersman stands on a raised platform at the windward side of the wheel, and in front of him is the steering compass, which he watches carefully. But there must be one eye for the sails and another for the ship's head, though if he is steering a compass course he does not need to watch the sails so carefully: he keeps an eye on the needle and does his best to keep the ship steady on that given course. In a vessel with a well-balanced sail plan a steersman should not have much trouble when the wind is on the quarter and the sea moderate: under these circumstances she will almost steer herself; but should the wind be dead aft it is the devil's own job to keep her running true. A man has to keep the wheel turning first to starboard, then to port, and not too hard over, but in time to meet the swinging of the ship's head.

This is where the experienced seaman shows his skill. But with a smart press of canvas, the wind right astern, and a heavy following sea, even he cannot stand his trick at the wheel for more than an hour at a time. This wheel is not the handy little thing you see on the sheltered bridges of steamers, but is a big clumsy six-foot affair calling for the whole of a man's strength to keep it from spinning round out of control. At times it is so obstinate that one can make no impression: it

is like trying to move a ton of bricks. There are few more irritatingly helpless situations than to see the compass needle gradually slipping away until it is a whole point, or even a couple of points, off the course, whilst you are uselessly wrestling with a wheel that refuses to yield. Everything wrong seems to happen forthwith. The sails, which have been kept asleep, suddenly flap violently, and the noise brings the 'Old Man' out of his chart-house like the flash coming out of a gun.

'Vat de hell you doing? You vill have de whole ship dismasted. Hard over dere—hard ov-er! For Heaven's sake!'

In his anxiety he would even run to the lee side of the wheel and lend a hand. Inch by inch, spoke by spoke, the great circle would yield, the sails would draw and go back to slumber, and once more the ship was on her course.

'Dere, now,' he would say. 'Keep her dere.'

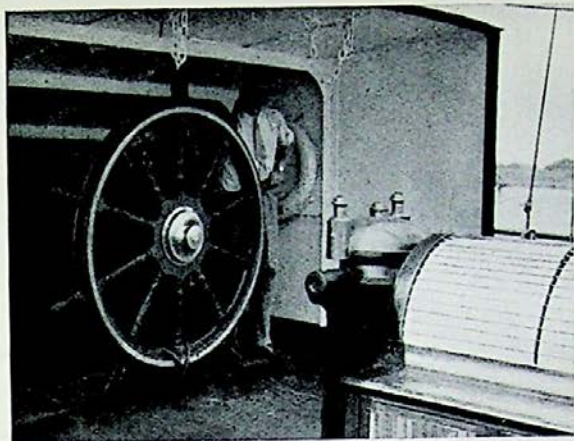
For some time he would remain standing, and giving an occasional direction with his hand. The physical exertion and nervous anticipation of all this made one furiously hot, but during the next few minutes she would run steadily and allow one to breathe freely. It gave one opportunity to glance at sky; enjoy the colour of sea, the changing shadows in the sails; even to feel a little more confidence in oneself as steersman. But such moments would be short-lived. Almost before one could realise, the ship had begun to take charge again. The compass proved it. One point—point and a half—two whole points! Slipping badly! Oh! damn the thing, and *Olivebank*, for being such a perverse devil!

One heaved and heaved with all one's might and

reserve strength, and then I began to understand the practical meaning of that phrase: 'Put your shoulder to the wheel.' It was a matter of putting not merely shoulder, but legs, arms, thighs, and one's whole body. The spokes pulled out fingers from joints, broke the blisters, and tore the skin. If for a moment control of the wheel was lost, it kicked, flew round with such terrific velocity, that it would have broken a limb had any part of one's body got in the way.

As I learned my job and became more practised, however, these incidents of bad steering rarely occurred. I began to know how much helm she needed, that it was useless to try moving the wheel when it was too heavy; but that the tip was to wait the right opportunity, and at the proper time the wheel would slip round of its own accord. All this education took time and involved many mistakes, yet I cannot remember having been once sent down from the wheel in disgrace. There even came a time when I took turns for Jim and Frank, whom the Captain could not trust in heavy weather.

The *Olivebank* has a wheel-house, and we used to say this was the best part of the ship. In the early days of big sail, such ships never had such protection, but as a result of accidents continually happening to ships and sailors these houses were added. They exist quite as much for their moral security as for their shielding against physical forces. Let me explain. Any reader who has never been afloat in really heavy weather can scarcely imagine the immensity of big seas rising sixty feet. Until he has seen for himself, it is impossible to appreciate the mighty force at the back of those Southern Ocean rollers. In unbroken power the wind has driven these green mountains over vast spaces for



'DIFFICULT TO SEE MUCH FROM THE WHEEL-HOUSE'



A SHIP WITHOUT A WHEEL-HOUSE
On board the barque *Favell*



thousands of miles. They rear themselves up astern in terrifying grandeur, and whilst the ship seems doomed she avoids being swamped to death because she lifts and lets the danger sweep under her.

But the moral effect on the steersman is something too serious for expression. Many a sound, normal sailor at the approach of these terrible rollers has suddenly lost his nerve, forsaken the wheel, and fled for'ard for safety, thus gravely endangering the ship, which might broach-to. Should one of these following waves leap upon the stern and poop the vessel, irreparable damage may ensue ; and it is merely repeating ancient history to state that over and over again have wheels been smashed to tiny pieces, and the helmsman washed to the fore part of the ship even though he had been lashed to the wheel. Chart-houses, too, have been swept overboard, and the poop left a complete wreck.

Some captains therefore used to rig a canvas weather-dodger abaft the steersman to prevent him seeing an oncoming wave, thereby preserving his nerve. But a wheel-house is a more efficient shelter and, in shielding the man from wind as well as sun, affords a welcome comfort. To turn out of a warm bunk in the middle of the night, and stand for a couple of hours at the wheel, bitter wind, sleet and snow driving over you, is not exactly amusing. After a while, when oilskins and clothes have ceased to keep your body dry, and you stand shivering ; or the rain trickles down the back of your neck despite a good 'sou'wester,' finding its way down to wrists and boots ; or your fingers and limbs seem so stiff that they must be frozen, you begin to want some shelter badly. It is now that a wheel-house proves its defensiveness in most weathers, and we who at times called the *Olivebank* every name that we could

lay tongue to, were no little thankful that she at least was a ship with a wheel-house.

But it was not always bad weather, and personally I rather welcomed a spell of steering. There was more variation and less monotony than in certain other jobs, and assuredly it was a great relief from the eternal paint-chipping, or washing out the fo'c'sle with strong caustic soda. Get some of the latter into a cut or blister after you have been hauling ropes, and you don't feel too pleased with cleansing duties ! I used to like the steersman's job, because it demanded one's intelligence to learn her little tricks that she continually kept altering ; for seldom did she steer alike for two consecutive watches. At times, when we were sailing 'by the wind,' it was necessary to turn the wheel not more than a couple of spokes during a whole hour.

Happiest were those days in the Trades, when the only difficult thing about one's trick at the wheel was how to keep awake. At night steering under these conditions could not be anything else than enjoyable, whilst one watched the stars peep through the sails. Often it was possible to steer as much by the stars as by compass, having chosen some bright star and then keeping it in line with the cro'jack yard or the main-royal. During the warm, Trade Wind nights, one could stand at the wheel in shirt and trousers only, watching the moonlight playing on the canvas, the ship steering so easily and, so long as the weather leach of the main-royal was just lifting, it was certain she was on her course. At night there is something beautiful, romantic, picturesque, about a sailing ship, with her great spread of canvas dimly silhouetted against the starlit dome of heaven ; and all the nautical noises make a strange symphony. The flickering yellow light of the

binnacle, the warm glare from the chart-house door, and perhaps the dark form of the Mate leaning on the rail at the break of the poop, are the features of many a picture which I remember still. It makes me restless to see and hear all these items once again before they shall disappear from the ocean for ever.

It may shock the Board of Trade authorities to be told that the *Olivebank* showed no navigation lights through the dark hours, thus saving so much kerosene. During the first week our courses were all more or less easterly, *i.e.* ENE., then SE., SE. by E., and E½N. One night there was vivid lightning which illumined sails and rigging weirdly. Phosphorus would float by in lumps, and you saw it not just when the water was broken by the ship but when it was approaching from quite a distance ahead. Dawn would come about 3.30, with cold grey light, and we would spend the morning chipping paint or red-leading under the fo'c'sle head. It was not too pleasant to have the rusty paint flying into our eyes, but it was all part of the routine. Once I started chipping a beam on the port side, until Hellberg spotted it.

'You not chip there, for goodness' sake,' he shouted. 'Dat de Port Watch's yob. Dat's a sin, dis. Leave dem to do it.'

Very quickly one learnt that it was useless charity to do extra work other than your own. The seventeen-year-old Jim, still incapable of hard work because of his seasickness, was given a large barrel to scrape. This youngest inhabitant of the fo'c'sle was a curious mixture of conceit and simplicity, who believed too much that was told him and possessed exaggerated opinions of himself. One day I was pulling his leg that tortoises, on reaching the age of 200 years, usually had their

shells chipped and scraped, then red-leaded and afterwards painted, to keep them from rusting. The lad quite believed it until he caught Frank laughing.

But it was difficult persuading him to eat. We continued to offer him soup, fatty meat, and other not very appetising fo'c'sle fare : but he was not interested.

'Yim, boy,' Koskinnen the burly Finn with the great appetite would exhort, 'Yim, you must eat someting. For goodness' sake, you must. You say "No" ? Oh vell ! I eat it for you,' and did. 'My fader at home he vorry and vorry. "You must eat," he tell me. Oh ! But he should see me now. At sea I eat and eat like a great horse, and until I hardly can walk. But on shore—I eat notings. I drink plenty though—you can be sure of dat.'

On our first Wednesday the wind actually dropped away to a flat calm, leaving the *Olivebank* rolling considerably to a southerly swell, with a great noise of flapping canvas and rattling blocks. Already it was cold at nights, and any day we expected it to blow hard ; for which reason life-lines had been rigged, port and starboard, the whole length of the ship, besides ropes across the hatches with short lines thereto attached at intervals, affording us something at which to clutch.¹ The 'Old Man' seemed always to be on deck, moving around in a pair of slippers, blue trousers, an old brown cardigan (out at the elbows), a cheese-cutter cap minus braid or badge, and always with his pipe. When he slept I could not find out, but neither he nor we shaved for the first week out of Melbourne. Next day a fine following breeze helped us along in grand style ; and under an overcast sky through the cold air, the grey

¹ These short lines primarily were used for securing the braces, which had been coiled on the hatches. They were thus less liable to become entangled.

seas and rain, we were rushing through the 'forties' of latitude. The time came in the early grey of morning to furl the great mainsail, and it was a notable sight to watch the figures of men working their way up the rigging, then fighting and wrestling on the yard with the vast canvas.

It seemed likely that this sail would remain furled for some time, since the wind had begun to blow hard, and the drab seas were curling over all round the ship. Koskinnen, Persson, and myself, having just finished hauling on the braces, were looking over the side amidships at the rising waves.

'Dey get bigger, I fink, to-night,' Persson assured. 'Soon ve vill have de great seas following us aboard. Dese look fine!'

Sure enough, next day there was a strong breeze with a high sea, accompanied by rain and sleet, but with bright intervals; and occasionally we would ship a heavy sea on deck. There was no question that we were well on our way now towards Cape Horn, but the shore grime had not yet been washed off the rigging, and our hands were always filthy black. This in itself mattered little, but there was always the possibility that into the mass of blisters and cuts some dirt might enter and quickly set up blood-poisoning. So I was always using iodine, which made any small wound sting acutely for half a minute, yet I felt it was worth while.

We were now, by the end of the first week, accustoming ourselves to days of hard toil and cold winds, with bitter nights. From eight till midnight we had been kept at it aloft taking in upper and lower t'gallants. A night pitch black, wind freshening with heavy squalls of rain, canvas stiff and refractory, one's hold not too secure, and the ship in a lively mood! No yachting

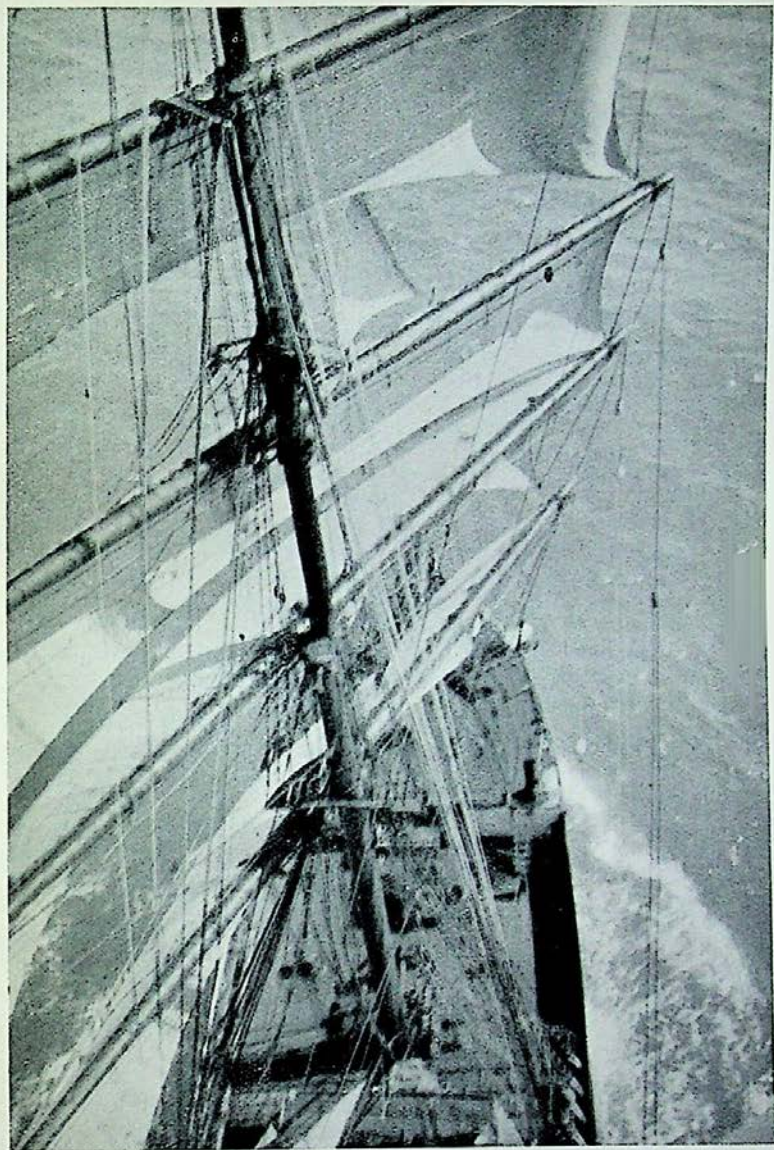
weather this ! But the orders had to be obeyed, and up we went, two of us to each sail. It was exhausting work climbing up through darkness and wind in heavy sea-boots and oilskins, the latter making it difficult to bend one's knees or to feel the foot-ropes, when already aloft.

'Gee !' exclaimed Koskinnen, 'you not stand on de foot-ropes at all. For goodness' sake, my voord !' he yelled at me.

(I knew that I wasn't. Actually I was standing on the sheets, which I was trying to find.) We had trouble with our upper t'gallant and couldn't make it fast properly, so that half an hour's straining and fighting passed before we could fix it ; but even thus the Carpenter had to come and assist us. Amid all this burst of energy I seized an opportunity to look down at the ship below in the darkness forging her way through broken seas and phosphorescent crests. In a vague dark mass the hull and deck loomed up, the only visible details being the lights shining from the 'Old Man's' cabin, and the red glow from the bowl of his pipe. The whole was like looking down on an independent piece of wood floating about with a few lights upon it.

To descend from the upper t'gallant yard to deck was work almost as strenuous as going aloft, and no sooner had we arrived than we were hauling on the sheets of the lower t'gallants. Throughout the watch we were kept busy hauling on braces, taking in stay-sails, or snugging her down generally. I got messed up again when clearing the braces, and the ropes became in a devil of a tangle. Owing to the darkness, I could neither find the ends nor how they were coiled. Finally Eight Bells went, and I rather shamefacedly left them for the next watch to unravel.

We were thankful that we could now turn into our



FROM ALOFT
Showing upper topsail weather-brace

bunks and sleep, but surely we had got warm enough ! We three who were new to the job were tired out. Doubtless the old hands felt nothing, nor would they feel much more when we got into really bad weather further south. Frank, Jim, and I often had to laugh at our own foolishness as we stood deserted by the rest on deck and we wondered where the others had gone, and what the dickens it was all about. If we were willing workers, matters were complicated by the fact that all the commands were given in Swedish, and that the Second Mate, being rather a dreamy kind of individual with a quiet voice, uttered his orders in a somewhat indefinite manner.

‘ If only,’ we bewailed, ‘ he would tell us to go aloft and make fast this or that sail, we should know what to do. As it is, we stand here scratching our heads wondering what we’re supposed to be at.’

Too often we would take in the slack when we shouldn’t have so done ; or let go a rope when it ought to have been fast. We would stare, look foolish, and wonder why we ever came to sea. Still, the end of our first week found us learning gradually. I at least knew how to furl a sail by now, clear buntlines, and sheets as well. There were plenty of pictures which caught my imagination. I longed to get busy with paints, brushes, and peg down the storm, the sunshine, the heavy green waves which came booming on board with the sound of artillery. Sometimes they would crash against our fo’c’sle head, darkening the ports, making the whole ship tremble, and the lower end of the deck would be awash with gurgling water which could be heard under one’s very bunk.

Outside we could hear the wind howling savagely, whilst the great waters rushed, swirled, and fell about

with the ship's pitching and rolling. We were flying along just now under foresail and upper topsails with staysails set most of the time, and lower t'gallants whenever possible. The only painting permissible at present was of a more practical character and confined to covering the fo'c'sle head. Of this duty I was getting more than weary because of its vicinity to the place where the ship's pigs were located, and the odour from these was most foul. To poor seasick Jim fell the job every morning of cleaning this sty, and if he was just a bit off colour, the task about finished him. One afternoon I had to paint inside the pigs' pen, standing and slipping amid their filthy mess and terrible stench.

And then up came the Second Mate to say that I shouldn't have started painting, and it would all have to be scraped ; which announcement made me feel so cross that I painted the letters JIM in red lead on the back of one of the pigs, and then I felt better. At any rate it amused the crowd !

It seemed hardly credible at the end of the first week that we had been at sea no longer : rather there was the feeling that we had been seafaring all our lives, and had never known other conditions. Melbourne—really not so exceedingly distant—seemed part of an old dream ; but during this period we in the fo'c'sle had been given time to learn each other's characters, to make a pretty shrewd estimate, and to adapt our attitude in accordance therewith. Jim, for example, had convinced us all that he was a chronic growser who failed to make the best of his unhappy circumstances. At first we had been sympathetic, helped him dress, even assisted him back to his bunk and covered him up with blankets to keep him warm. After a while we got weary of standing his trick at the wheel, or doing his job as look-out.

It was Koskinen who upbraided him.

'It is no use for you to lie in your bunk for ever, Yim. Dat is not vat a sailor is for. My voord! No! Ven I first go to sea, I vas de same as you: but I vork yust the same. Astrom, he too vere sick. You tink he give up? My voord! No! He haul on de braces, and vos sick. He go aloft, and vos sick. He eat, and vos sick. But he never gif up.'

It was some days before Jim recovered from his seasickness, but Frank (who had been equally unwell) earned our admiration by the way he tried and tried again to do his job. We liked him because he had more 'guts,' never complained, and always carried on. Even one night, when a swinging block in the darkness hit his face and broke his nose, causing him for weeks after to suffer from neuralgia, he said little about it. If he became depressed, there was even more silence about him than usual, so that he kept his feelings to himself: yet I knew that he was not happy.

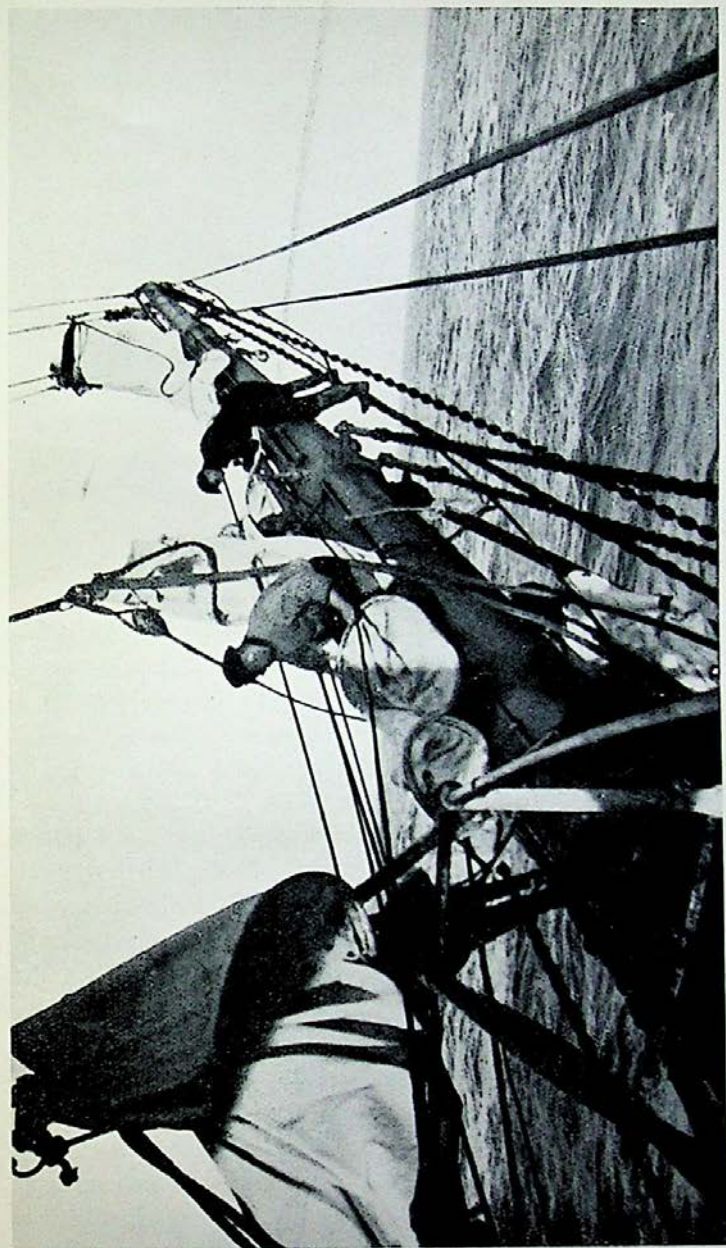
During these seven days we had settled down to our respective jobs and ship routine. Work about the ship started at 6 a.m., the A.B.s being sent aloft to repair the rigging, or some item needing a man of experience; whilst we others would begin cleaning or carrying water. I remember Jim not talking to me for days because he considered the Second Mate gave me the more pleasant task of water-carrying in preference to favouring this apprentice. At any rate that was the lad's alleged grievance. Actually the Mate was thoroughly fair to us all, and exhibited no favouritism.

Personally, I liked this officer, although some of the older hands criticised his seamanship. One has to remember that the Second Mate is not his own master but acting on the commands of his Captain, under

whose critical eye he remains and thus has very little opportunity for initiative or originality. Men said he was timid, but I believe he was quite as good a sailor as the 'Old Man,' and that it was the latter who was ultra-cautious. At the first puff of wind we should be ordered aloft to stow sail, and it soon was very manifest that we were not out to break records this voyage. The Captain in every ship is always summed up with clear, sharp-cut remarks; and so was ours. 'Too bloody careful of his pocket-handkerchiefs,' the fo'c'sle had formed their opinion of him.

It is a strange coincidence that we in the Starboard Watch were always the unlucky. Time and again we would spend the whole of our deck-watch taking in sail; whereas the Port Watch on succeeding us would have nothing to do, so that when we came on duty again we should find everything just as we had left matters. But now again we would be sent aloft to reduce sail, or perhaps to set it. Finally this difference in fortune was so marked as to admit of no argument. The Port Watch confessed themselves extremely lucky. They certainly were, but this sort of chance is well known in sailing ships.

I mentioned the not unpleasant job of fetching fresh water. On a long voyage, such as ours, rationing of the precious fluid was a serious matter. The pump handle was purposely kept aft under the Captain's care, and there was no other means of obtaining the water. But every Monday morning the 'Timberman' would measure the depth in the tanks to maintain a check on the ship's supply. Had there been leaks, we should have experienced anxious days till the heavy rains arrived. The schedule allowed that both fo'c'sles received daily one bucketful, the Steward received two,



STOWING THE JIBS
Two of the Port Watch on the jib-boom



and the Cook was given ten. It was thus that I began to acquire a Swedish vocabulary.

On delivering a bucketful at the galley door, I was taught one word by the Cook, and when I returned he would tell me another. Thus was I taught a sentence of ten words. I was an indifferent pupil, and he was the only one at all inclined to teach us the language of Sweden. It was noticeable that the others, whilst keen enough to learn all the English we would impart, somewhat resented our trying to reciprocate. Indeed, I afterwards discovered that the reason for wanting me in the for'ard fo'c'sle was partly because they would be able to acquire English more readily.

I had the feeling (rightly or erroneously) that the Scandinavians had no great liking for England, or things English : certainly it would be a very mistaken idea to imagine that they regarded any Englishman at all as possessing superiority to themselves. Nevertheless, I had a great admiration for the Scandinavian, than whom there is no better sailor in the whole world, and I found him both a fine individual as well as a worthy shipmate. The more I got to know them, the more I admired their courage ; for they seemed to laugh at danger, to welcome hard weather and discomfiture, as if it were just some game which they were playing with the spirit of true sportsmen.

There was one deck-hand job which I used to hate, and Saturday morning was always the appointed time. The duty was known as 'bunkering the Cook,' and consisted of replenishing the coal in his galley. This had to be wheeled from the fore peak to the galley amidships : a perfectly easy performance. But the unfortunate deck-hand sent down into the coal-hole was the fellow to be pitied. Here it was as black as the

proverbial nigger's throat. At the beginning of the voyage there was not room in that hole to stand upright : I had to remain for at least an hour doubled up in a cloud of dust shovelling coal into buckets, which were hauled up on deck by means of tackle and block. Often enough, just as a bucket had been filled, the ship would give a heavy roll, upsetting the contents and sending me to turn a series of back somersaults into the dark bowels of the ship. Believe me, in that black bunker I swore more viciously and consistently than I have ever sworn before or since. Down there seemed a foretaste of hell, but what would the hole be like when we reached the tropics, with no sort of ventilation ?

The food aboard this ship needed a certain amount of personal adaptation and acclimatising. For Sunday tea we were given 'plum duff.' It was black and indigestible, yet, when one had extracted the bits of newspaper, rags, and other foreign matter, it was none too bad. What we failed to eat immediately, we put away in a locker and then had another go at it during the night. If this speciality of the Cook seemed cold, clammy, and weighed too heavily on the stomach, we were generally so hungry that we looked forward with eagerness to Sunday afternoon.

By the end of our first week we certainly resembled a collection of dangerous pirates, if appearances meant anything at all. Shortly after leaving Melbourne several of the crew clipped their hair short to the scalp, till they looked like convicts. With the exception of us Englishmen (who were 'no bloody sailors'), every man stowed away his razor, having resolved not to shave their beards till well round Cape Horn. Thus, youngsters of nineteen and twenty soon had growths on their faces which made them appear quite elderly. Plenard, who had

very fair hair, grew a ginger beard much to everybody's amusement, and his own pride. Often I would see him standing at his bunk stroking his fiery whiskers and admiring himself in the cracked remnant of a mirror which he propped up before him.

There was no moon during these first few days, yet I have had to mention the economy in regard to sidelights. The same principle was carried out in both fo'c'sles, where a half-pint of kerosene had to last a week. The nights being so dark, we used to stumble about on deck with such frequency that our shins became black-and-blue. But then at last would come the dawn, and one saw the great foresail, the jibs, the fo'c'sle deck rails, the ship's bell, the capstan. The sun rose over a blue-green sea, with a grey storm-cloud away on the horizon. Wet sails would show yellow with a half transparency, full of curious shadows from blocks and rigging. Near the poop deck a wave would rise like a sugar-loaf; at the waist a shipped sea would go retreating, leaving behind wet decks glistening in the sunshine.

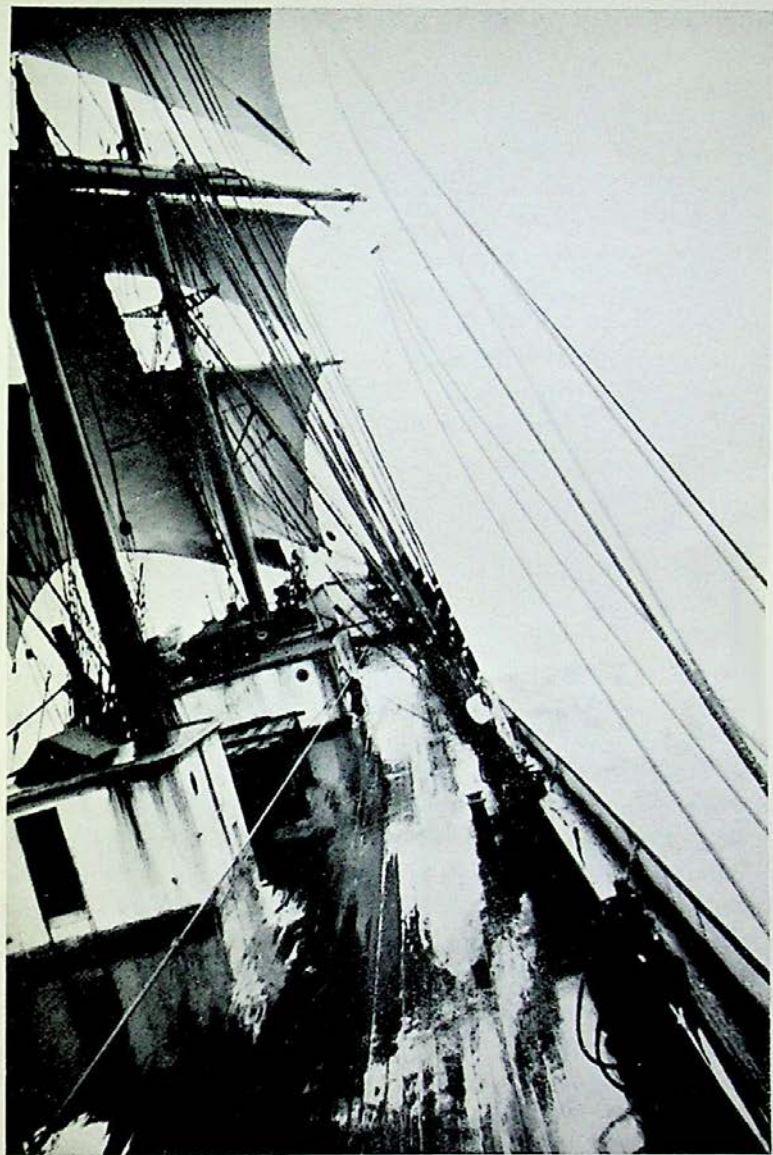
CHAPTER V

HEAVY WEATHER

THERE followed a day with an angry sunrise. Persson, Koskinnen, and I watched the light return as we paced the deck outside our fo'c'sle waiting for Eight Bells, when we would run aft for the muster, and then back again for a sleep of three and a half hours. As we turned in, the sails looked ghostly white against the cold morning sky, and a few stars still glimmered. But when we came out again at 8 a.m. the clouds had begun to drop rain, the breeze had hardened to a strong wind or a moderate gale, and the seas were blowing over in white spume.

It was my turn at the wheel, and I found the steering so heavy that the Second Mate took it for a minute till I could throw off oilskin coat and hat ; for it was still summer in these latitudes. A few minutes later, just when I was settling down and getting accustomed, the wheel gave a sudden kick, wrenched itself out of my hands, and went whizzing round. It all happened like a flash. Fortunately, before it had gone too far I caught it again, though not without a severe knock on the knee, which I had jammed between the wheel and wheel-box. My forearm was severely bruised, but, luckily, I had on my 'stormguard' coat, whose thick padding saved me from worse knocks.

Now the Mate turned round just in time to see what was happening, and I was relieved to note that he smiled,



HEELING OVER TO IT

The *Olivebank* in a hard breeze. Note the life-lines on deck

though I had expected to be cursed. He told me that on the last voyage the steersman had been taken clean over the top ; that one moment the fellow was standing at the side of the wheel, but in the next moment there followed the strange moving pictures of a pair of sea-boots being flung round, and then of a man lying in a heap at the opposite side of the wheel-house, whilst the wheel revolved violently ! This had occurred in the North Atlantic during heavy weather, and it was in the same voyage the *Olivebank* had got out of control, luffed up into the wind, when the mainsail flapped itself with such force that within half a minute it was blown into ribbons.

That must have been a terribly slow trip out from Europe. The *Olivebank* took nearly a couple of months beating about off the north of Scotland, and was ninety days before she reached the equator : so it looked as if my run home would also be prolonged. Still, there was the old sailor's saying which would give some comfort to my messmates : ' More days—more dollars.' At present it was a fair wind, and we were logging our nine or ten knots, running before the gale under upper and lower topsails and foresail, but still with some thousands of miles between us and Cape Horn. Such a noise was being made by wind and sea that in our own fo'c'sle we should not have been able to hear the whistle blown, so we spent our free time in the fo'c'sle aft, sitting around the table yarning in subdued tones out of consideration for the others sleeping out their watch below.

Among those awake was a great swarthy Australian, with a fortnight-old black scrub on his face. He was finding it impossible to sleep, and popped his head out of his bunk to declare in unfiltered nautical language

that he had had some hard spells in his time, but this 'bastard of a job beat the whole bloody lot.' What was he by trade? A ship's fireman. Four hours on and eight off. 'No more bloody sailing-ship stunts for me!' Next time it would be a steamer.

Exactly opposed to this attitude argued Koskinnen, who had always been in sail and would have nothing whatsoever to do with steam. He would remain in the former until there were no more afloat. Jim, too, favoured us with his considered opinion, and talked about getting into a steamer so as to see more of the world! Not quite so keen on sailing vessels as he was! We had now been out ten days and were still a considerable distance south of New Zealand, our noon position being Lat. 53° S., Long. 170° E., but were heading up on a NE. course. It was quite cold enough, and we were keeping a look-out for icebergs. No sooner had we turned out in the morning than Jim and I were sent aloft to let loose main upper t'gallant sail. It was tough work slacking off the gaskets, which had become taut with strain and wet till they were hard as iron. Poor Jim couldn't make much of them, so I had to go out and help him. When he came down on deck again, the Mate cursed him for being so slow.

But Jim did not take his correction too well. There was an excessive Australian self-assertiveness which he had too readily assimilated, and scarcely befitted him. He was able, also, to annoy most of us. Somehow I found that he liked better telling me how to do things than I liked being told. Koskinnen, who was always fair, broadminded, and thoroughly good-hearted, was reaching the climax of endurance with the lad.

'Very soon now I take dat Yim in hand, and tell him how to be a man.'

We knew that Koskinnen meant it, too.

There was something invigorating to have a day of sunshine and bracing wind. The big swell and great seas were impressive, and the latter would continually come crashing aboard, so that you had to watch your step. I got caught beautifully. It happened that Jim was in the Carpenter's shop, and did not hear the bell telling him it was time that he should fetch the coffee: so I went after it myself, and had just reached the galley when a big wave lopped up over the side, so I jumped, though not soon enough. Along came that wave soaking me through, washing away the contents of the coffee-pot, sweeping round the galley knee-deep, putting out the fire and filling the place with steam.

Life had settled down to just those three items of working, eating, and sleeping, and all so very closely interrelated. There seemed virtually no time for looking about, and enjoying the movement of sea or sky: still less for sketching. But Wednesday, January 28, was something quite exceptional. Our noon position was Lat. 52° S., Long. 180° E. Now by reason of this longitude we had to reckon two Wednesdays in the week, otherwise we should have been a day ahead in our navigation; as of course every reader well understands. But we in the fo'c'sle considered ourselves unlucky that this longitude had not fallen upon a Sunday. We had to work an additional day, and the only compensation was that the Skipper served us out a glass of gin each. Since Jim didn't drink, and Persson didn't, there were two rations over. These were acquired by Astrom, who, by bribing the Steward with vague promises, somehow succeeded in obtaining seven drinks for himself. The result was that he became more than

'half seas over' that afternoon, filling the fo'c'sle with laughter, oaths, and raucous songs.

It was under these conditions that we passed the Antipodes Islands, a rocky, lonely group which lies most of 500 miles SE. of New Zealand, and is that region of the globe diametrically opposite to the position of the British Isles. Thus did we make a final severance with the vast Australian continent and its physical continuations, so there existed nothing now but sea between us and Cape Horn with the exception of possible ice. There blew a fresh wind from the south, and we were still heading up to the north-east before getting into the already mentioned zone, where we should hope to find steady westerlies. How many weeks would elapse before we should sight the shores of South America? And with what sort of a landfall should we make contact?

It was a strange little mobile world, this *Olivebank*, with its handful of men, their distinctive characters, their likes and prejudices. Within that steel hull, at the mercy of wind and wave, went on from day to day a powerful drama of extraordinary simplicity; yet, had we given consideration to the matter, what a minute and lonely spot this human habitation remained on that immeasurable Pacific Ocean! Out of touch with the rest of the world, its problems and political crises, our lives were full with the perpetual routine of keeping things going. If at this hour the wind was southerly, it would change during the next two hours to northerly, thus keeping us perpetually hauling on the braces. How glorious it would be when we got further north into the more settled breezes! How still more wonderful when we should strike the Trade Winds!

In our little community the smallest factors took on

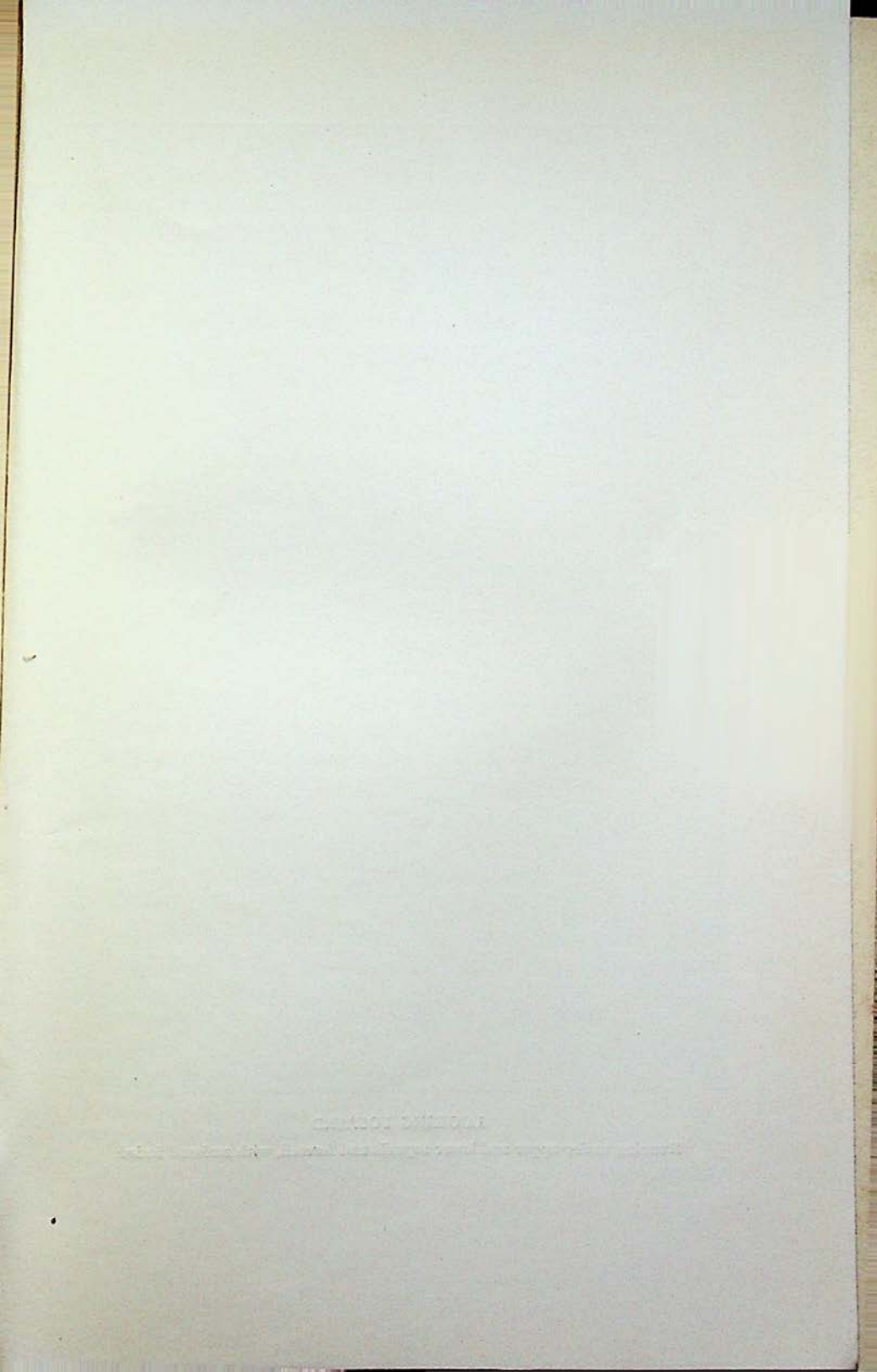
an importance that would have seemed ridiculous ashore. Mending, sewing, washing clothes ; washing dishes and then trying to dry them with a filthy, greasy cloth that refused to perform its duty ; observing Jim's tactless manner of making enemies all round ; listening to others growling : that was the kind of life below during waking hours. On deck it would be chipping and scraping when not busy with sheets or braces, but the foulest job was to do this chipping below in part of the hold where four men worked with only a manhole as ventilator, a miserable hurricane lamp as illumination, and a space measuring about 6 feet by 6 feet by $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet high. During such times neither Pacific, nor Atlantic, nor countries or civilisations, existed for us : our world was a minute cosmos at whose head reigned the Captain, and so long as we kept on hitting something he would not suspect us of idling, but if we ceased making a noise the Mate would come along to know why.

Thus all values had been transformed since leaving Melbourne, and the whole human outlook, so far as it concerned me, had become utterly twisted. We calculated, for instance, that during the prolonged period of a forty-eight-hour Wednesday we worked for less than a penny an hour, which was about the scale of convict remuneration. I confess that all this crawling about in the choking bilges, where no room existed for standing upright, amid the foul dirt and dust of ages, cramped up in the half darkness, seemed to me a poor sort of game ; and I had not come to sea for the pleasure of chipping paint. But here, again, it was just a question of readapting one's attitude and getting the contrasts right. If it was unbearably hot and airless down there, at least one escaped the wet and cold of the deck ; and whilst we were compelled by sheer

necessity occasionally to put the head up through the manhole, how refreshingly good the sea air came to nose and lungs. It was like a cooling drink ! After the mildew, rats, and foul stench of the bilges, how clean it seemed on deck ! How homely even our bare fo'c'sle became !

But in a vessel such as the *Olivebank* there is little relief from prolonged anxiety and suspense for the Skipper. Not so in a steamship, where this responsibility is partly shared by the Chief Engineer, who can be relied upon to see that the engines continue to go round and not suffer damage. The Master of a sailing ship, however, must, among other duties such as navigation, ensure that neither sails nor spars, neither shrouds nor braces, carry away. Therefore, so long as wind or weather are changeable (which is to say at almost all times except the Trade Winds period) he is everlastingly on the alert, visualising the future, anticipating the next move. In the old tea-clippers it is well known that for three months the 'Old Man' would scarcely leave the poop or have his clothes off his back, snatching a little sleep when he could. The result was that these Skippers made surprisingly few voyages, in command, before it was time for them to retire ashore.

So it was with the *Olivebank's* Captain. In his lonely responsibility, his restricted world that ended at the break of the poop, there was more to occupy his entire attention than many of us in the fo'c'sle realised. Whilst we criticised him for his cautiousness, he was taking warning from a falling barometer and acting reasonably in order to conserve masts and canvas. There was a fresh south-east wind now, he began sending us to take in sail during the middle watch of Thursday, but by the time he had got us on deck the wind had fallen off so





LOOKING FOR'ARD

Running under upper and lower topsails and foresail, with mainsail furled

that we could see no justification for this order. Then came an ominous sunrise, with a sky that suggested dirty weather for a certainty. We had been sent aloft to stow the lower t'gallants, and wrestled with a sail that bulged awkwardly yet was dry and not too heavy. Once again we hauled on the braces, and then went for'ard thinking that we were going to have an easy time for the rest of the watch.

Not for long !

We were scarcely doing more than six or seven knots, but the 'Old Man' was risking nothing. The wind was strengthening, the sea rising seriously, and its crests being driven in clouds of blown spume. I chanced to be at the wheel when hands were sent aloft to take in the mizzen topsails, and this reduction of canvas eased her considerably, so that I found she needed only about half the amount of starboard helm. A good deal of spray was coming over the poop, whilst on deck she was shipping a considerable amount of solid water, thereby necessitating some acrobatics with the life-lines on the part of those who passed along deck.

Before our watch went below we had taken in also the main upper topsail, and there I was working alongside the Carpenter, who spat on his hands to try and get a better grip of the obstinate canvas. It was no joke getting hold of the foot and leach and endeavouring to lay them along the yard, but at least such toil and struggling gave us enormous appetites by the time we gained the fo'c'sle. All with the exception of Jim. For him life was one round of trouble. Having recently damaged his finger in a doorway, he must now again give way to seasickness. On the top of this, whilst he was on deck, there came a heavy sea over the starboard side, which, catching him, hurled him like a log against

the Carpenter's shop, drenched and sodden. Throughout the rest of that day he moaned, swore, grumbled, and called to mind all the miserable things capable of occurrence : yet, in complete contrast with this specimen of misery, the rest of the crowd were even more cheerful than usual, laughing, singing, and joking in an effort to make the best of the not too pleasant surroundings outside.

But during the afternoon that gale increased and increased. The time came for us to take in the last upper topsail ; besides the main-, mizzen-, and jigger-mast staysails. The mizzen staysail was caught barely in time, for it developed a rent and very shortly would have been torn to shreds. Let no one imagine that when we were off watch, down below, our fo'c'sle was as comfortable as the first-class cabins of a luxury liner. Lying in my bunk, with all the din going on outside, I shuddered as I thought of having to dress on the cold wet floor and then emerge on deck to face the wild fury of this storm.

With so little sail set and so heavy a sea, she was rolling outrageously. Our sea-chests slid violently across the floor, enamelled mugs in the lockers jostled and clattered ; whilst buckets, cans, and everything that could move, cruised round to make the sounds still more grotesque. But above all were the ' noises without '—the wild thumping and surging of seas against steel hull, the savage roaring of wind through the rigging. The skylight had worked loose, and kept banging with a loud report. Plenard observed that we should have to make it fast. Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when it banged again—and worse—sending a shower of splintered glass, part of which descended on to our table into the butter and biscuits which we

were about to eat, and part striking Plenard's head, making a deep cut.

In came the rain and salt water, thus depriving us of our sole refuge, making existence scarcely less disagreeable off watch than on. There was no alternative but to go and board up the skylight, which we presently proceeded to do. First I dealt with Plenard, cutting away the hair from his wound, then patching the latter with sticking plaster. Our condition was somewhat gloomy. At the best of times no one could have asserted that the fo'c'sle was well lit, but now it was plunged into dismal darkness. If we had at least stopped water coming through the roof, it still spurted through the doors. And this must have been Plenard's unlucky day, for, having sat down to his coffee and biscuits again, there came a heavy lurch from *Olivebank* which caught him off his balance. He slipped, fell, and the coffee-pot slid off likewise, sousing him with the warm dregs. What a life! Every one of us kept sliding and bruising our poor bodies, yet still most of us laughed and were only too glad that we could make light of all this depression.

Before darkness fell over the Pacific all hands were set to furl the foresail. This is the heaviest sail of all, especially when wet, and every man had the devil's own job. It demanded the full limits of our strength and endurance. As one looked from the yard at that enormous, slatting expanse, it seemed a hopeless and untameable job. Still, at length after a fierce contest we conquered, and then returned to deck hot with the exertion, yet wringing wet with rain and spray. But the climax of that blow came a little later.

During the blackness of night Nature seemed to have gone as stark mad as some infuriated beast of the

jungle. The wind increased from gale force to hurricane, the water surged up and down deck like the torrent of a river in rushing flood. The ship lurched and heaved foolishly, performing most extraordinary capers for a vessel of her tonnage ; and as she tried to hold herself through the attacking waves she was more submarine than sailing ship. From the fo'c'sle it all sounded like some crazy symphony of groaning and complaining, swirling waters and shrieking furies, varied by thunder hammerings which made the much-tried *Olivebank* tremble, till you feared her rivets would jump out and she would sink to the bottom. Surely no night could be more frantic, more intensely terrifying. I was sorry for poor seasick Jim, with his damaged finger, his sad heart, and now a bleeding nose. On the fo'c'sle roof above us he was keeping his look-out. Too much water there for any man to be safe, though the main t'gallant stay above him afforded something to catch hold of.

That gale continued for several days, and then, having blown itself out, settled down to a strong southwester, though not before giving us such a night as few of us will ever forget. Some of you doubtless have read of storms at sea, of hardship and exposure, of men washed overboard, of others fighting waist-deep in swirling waters, of waves running fifty and sixty feet high. And you thought it was romantic exaggeration. But, please believe me, it is quite impossible to exaggerate, and all these things are true. One has to go afloat on an ocean voyage in a heavily-laden, short-handed, sailing vessel to appreciate the fearfulness of such an experience on such a night as I shall now describe.

It was 10 p.m. when the two blasts of a whistle summoned us aft. Leaving the fo'c'sle, we fought our

way along deck through the loose water that gurgled around our legs and the rain that smote our faces. The gale was filling our ears with wild noises.

'Lee mizzen braces !'

It was the Second Mate who shouted, but only with difficulty could he make himself heard above the wind.

'Lee mizzen braces ! Now then, lads, all together !'

And it was just whilst we were in the act of hauling that the Second Mate yelled :

'Look out !'

Or, rather, this is what he meant. He shouted in Swedish, so that I failed to understand or realise what was happening until a sea came rushing down deck towards us. In a second it had mounted as high as our waists.

My shipmates made a jump and dashed for safety on to the poop ladder a few yards away ; but I had temporarily got my leg jammed by a rope between the bitts. Realising that with the increasing weight of water I should quickly have it broken if I didn't get it away, I made an effort and wrenched it free. More prudent and safer would it have been had I kept my leg where it was, for scarcely had the freedom been obtained than I was lifted clean off the deck, my feet flew out horizontally, and I found myself hanging out over the ship's side. Thrilling moment ! With all the strength in me I held on grimly, desperately, hopelessly, to the braces. For seconds which were like centuries I just remained suspended in that uncertain position, with only the tenacity of hands and nails between me and death by drowning. As the wave passed and fell away I found myself still clinging but still outside the

Olivebank, whose hull had pinched my hands against the thick rope. My clothes were heavy with water, and I could not hold on much longer. I remember catching a glimpse of the figures crowding in safety on the poop ladder, envying their position, and made strenuous attempts to reach them. But my oilskins and sea-boots were now so weighted that it was like being ballasted with lead.

How long could this struggle last, I wondered. Time and again I flung myself towards my shipmates, grasping a support, then the banisters, next the rail, in a wild endeavour to get a foothold somewhere ; yet on each occasion I failed. Koskinnen was doing his best to help me back to security, and I could feel his kindly grip about my arm, but even that assistance did not bring success. Finally, with the great fellow's heaving and my own last effort, I was snatched from death and found myself safe, but panting, exhausted, and thoroughly shaken. It was the experience of a lifetime, and the ocean all but got me that time !

But throughout to-night the whole lot of us were face to face with death, and there was no telling when those sweeping seas would take toll of this man or that. Had she been a steamer, we could just have chosen some safe spot and watched her driving into it, but in a sailing ship there is so much trimming and tending to be done to keep her still going ahead.

'All hands present? Orl right, then. Mizzen weather braces !'

So off we went again. Watching our chance, we leapt down on deck and relied upon the quickness of our activity to do the job and scuttle off before too late.

We hauled and we hauled, furiously and fiercely.

Even the 'Old Man' himself descended from his poop to shout encouragement. We could not have been long at this job, and certainly wasted not a moment, but I was still breathless from the last experience and it seemed another aeon of time before we heard the guttural command :

'Fast ! So !'

I was soaked to the skin, the rain and salt water lashed our faces, and it was difficult to hold on for our lives. Twelve o'clock was the hour for our watch below, and how we looked forward to it ! I rubbed up against Frank, and we yelled to each other that twelve o'clock couldn't be so far away now.

At last Eight Bells sounded, and we were just off to the fo'c'sle with thoughts of changing into dry clothes, when all of a sudden we heard three blasts on the whistle.

Now 'Three Whistles' meant 'All hands on deck !' So there was no chance of an easy just yet awhile, and up came the Port Watch to help us, the First Mate stepped down from the poop, whilst we rushed fighting our way along the gangway that extended from bridge to poop. But now thundered on board a monstrous sea which sped irresistibly aft, with no respect for the lives of men. The First Mate had not time even to jump out of this torrent, and we heard an agonised cry for help rise from the dark mass. Again, and yet again, the pathetic appeal sounded, and the Second Mate advanced fighting his way down, but was soon lost to us in the confusion of wild waters. We could do nothing, we could see nothing, we were helpless in the presence of Nature's overwhelming might, so we stood there watching in the darkness for the invisible struggle that was going on by our two officers.

Such incidents as these, so fraught with destiny, so deep in drama, almost defeat any attempt of expression, whether by words or picture. The suspense, the uncertainty, the horror, the sense of awe, the mental and nervous pain, are too grievous for reproduction. We who had just been halfway through death's-door, and come back, slowly realised only too well what was happening amid the black waters to the Mates. We waited, and we waited.

Suddenly they emerged, thank Heaven ! Staggering weakly, they mounted the poop ladder in safety with ready hands to help them. What a marvellous escape ! For we were to learn presently that the Second Mate had been washed over the side once, but the First Mate was swept over *four* times. Only by a few seconds was either saved, for the same reason as already mentioned in my own case : and the weight of water in the clothes was so impossible after a while that human grasp could not hold on much longer.

I must give up any attempt to make a comprehensive description of that wicked night when wind and waves continued to get worse, and the mountains fell down upon us with terrifying anger. It would have been less intolerable had it been daytime and the confusion been modified. Added to the pitch darkness was the difficulty for us Englishmen of hearing important orders given in Swedish that might just as well have been in Chinese. It was all so harassing that we did not know, could not discover, what we were being told to do. And it aggravated the situation when we could not see exactly what the others were about. So at the best we held on eagerly to avoid being thrown into the ocean, and hauled on to ropes whenever and wherever we could lend a hand.

This was not too simple, since the ropes from the braces had been washed about the decks and got into preposterous tangles. We had no easy job clearing them and coiling them up, but then we betook ourselves to bridge-deck and poop where we could work in comparative safety. Here at least we should fare better than at the pin-rail, for the seas were frequently leaping eight feet in height over the ship's side. And what sort of chance could any poor sailor have when he could neither see nor have the time to escape? For two weary hours we went on hauling in a manner that to me seemed without purpose or design, yet at last we had got the braces clear, so now we were sent to shelter in the wheel-house.

There I found myself by the side of the Second Mate.

'Orl right! You can go below now. But be ready in case you're wanted.'

It seemed madness to try reaching our fo'c'sle, so instead I sought out the Carpenter's and Bo'sun's cabin aft, where also I found Frank with Koskinnen and the Carpenter. The latter produced a great hunk of bully beef, and mighty glad were we to break off chunks with our fingers. Sandwiched between two slabs of bread, flavoured with sauce out of a bottle, this food was a godsend. Presently the other two men left us, so that Frank and I sat there eating and saying the most absurd things to each other. The water was swishing about our feet, we were soaking wet to the skin and chilled to the bone, yet, being a couple of Englishmen, we hid our real feelings and managed to make light jokes as if the terrors of the night outside were nothing at all.

At length I resolved that if the others would try

going for'ard, so would I. Listening for the slightest lull, I opened the door and stepped out into the tempest. The Bo'sun was just going for'ard also, with a torch to light him on his way. We stood and waited our chance, and by a series of short rushes between the seas made our way till I reached the fo'c'sle's weather side, where I was glad to find the handrail in my grasp. Quickly and carefully I hauled round, climbing over the winch, and at last found the door on the lee side of the fo'c'sle.

Inside were Persson and Koskinnen stripping off their sopping clothes, and it was an agreeable surprise that our fo'c'sle was more dry than the one aft, though the water continued to wash backwards and forwards across the floor. Inasmuch as a certain amount of grease had accumulated around the neighbourhood of the table, the place was dangerously slippery and a firm foothold impossible. Thus did we keep sliding across the floor, till at length we brought up heavily against bulkheads or bunks. Our little home was scarcely a palace and had not been beautified by Koskinnen, who rigged lines athwart its limited space to dry shirts, vests, pants, socks, and oilskins.

He and Persson were soon in their bunks asleep. I sat down on the wet bench and began shedding layer and layer of my soaking raiment, hanging them up with a hope that some day the sun would shine and they would become dry. I paddled about in bare feet to my sea-chest and extracted some fresh clothes ready for the next watch, now only two hours ahead. Then I crawled into my bunk and enjoyed the wonderful sensation of returning warmth. But sleep? That was impossible after this excitement, for the sickening heaving and rolling of the ship combined with the

tempestuous roaring kept me wide awake. Tremendous waves could be heard dashing over our heads and then pouring down in cascades.

It must have been about 3 a.m. when the *Olivebank* gave a roll far worse than anything she had attempted hitherto. I held my breath and instinctively felt that some crisis was now approaching. Nor was it long delayed. A terrific sea crashed against the fo'c'sle with alarming violence, so that the whole world seemed to groan. You could feel the hull bend, the ceiling buckle, hear the sound of splitting wood on the roof, and then showers of water came spouting down, drenching table and half extinguishing the lamp. At first I genuinely believed in all seriousness that we were all going to the bottom, so up I sprang. Persson and Koskinnen were still asleep and snoring, so I lay down again waiting and listening.

At 3.45 a.m. Plenard awoke us with 'Rise up, boys Rise up!' And reluctantly we did rise from the warmth of our bunks to thrust our bodies once more into cold damp oilskins. From Plenard we learned that it was the big starboard lifeboat which had carried away from its lashings, wrenching the chocks clean away. It had jammed itself bottom uppermost against the small boat and there remained. We learned, too, that a big wave had swept the poop, nearly carrying away the two men at the wheel together with the Captain and all the Port Watch. It had smashed the binnacle glass, washed away the port light, wrenching the whole structure from the fittings. The gale was still revelling in its fury, but the grey early morning light was happily creeping through our ports.

Thank God for daylight!

And just as we were nearly dressed the lamp fizzled

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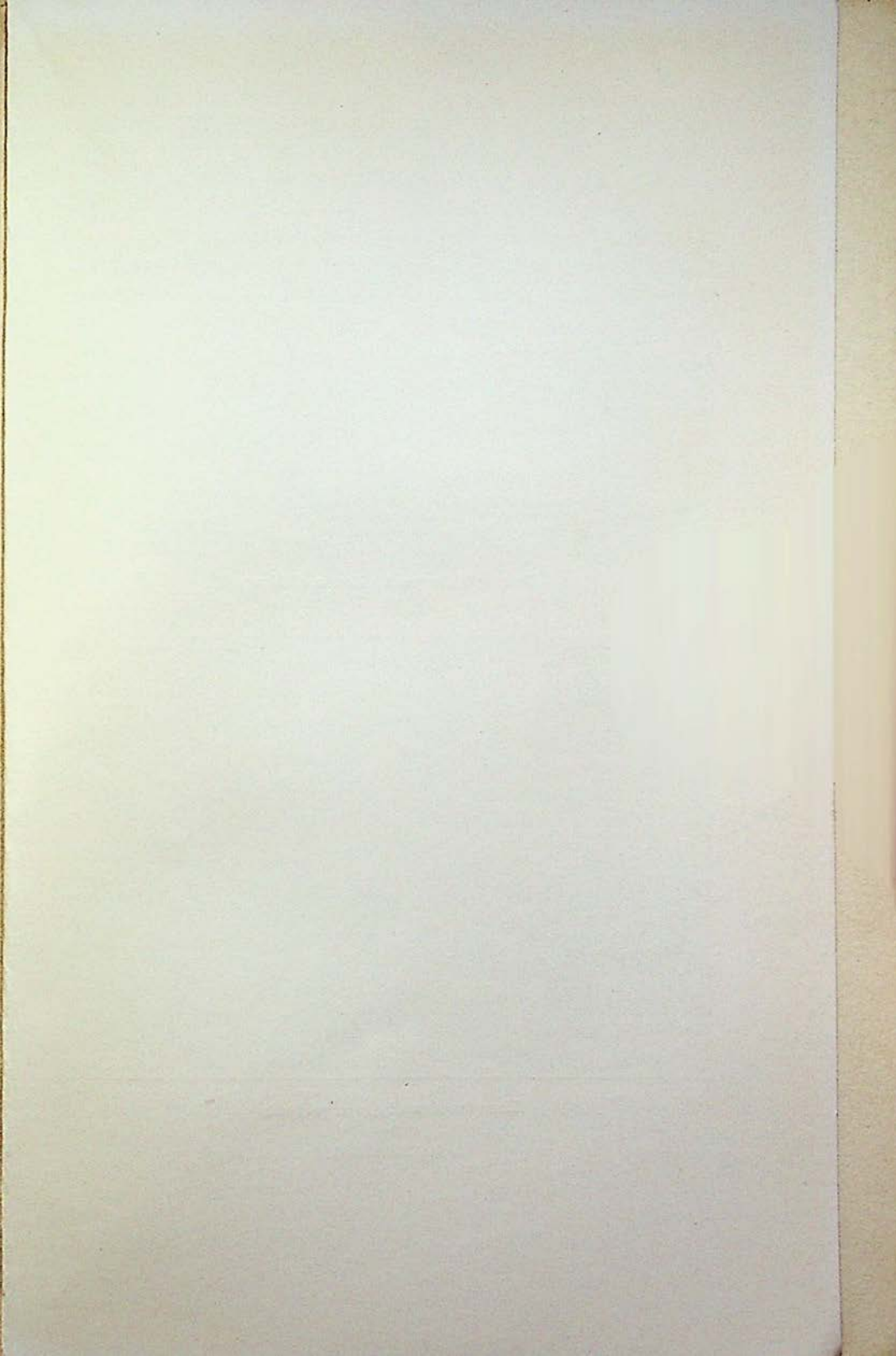
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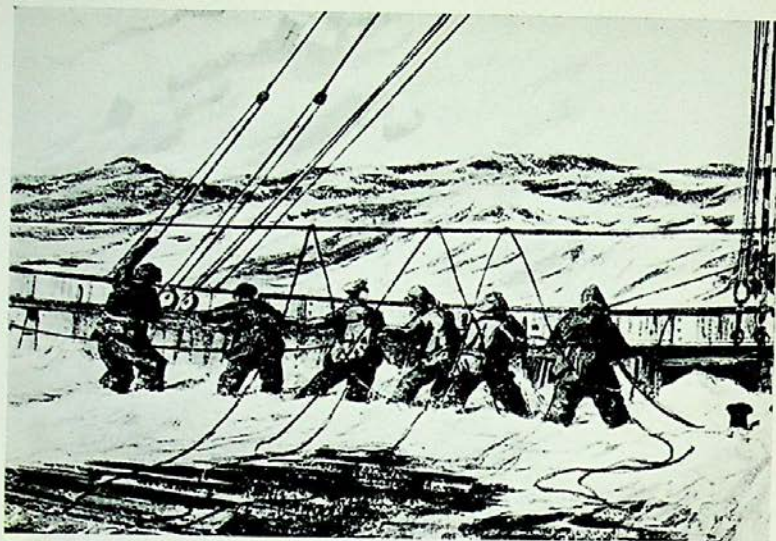
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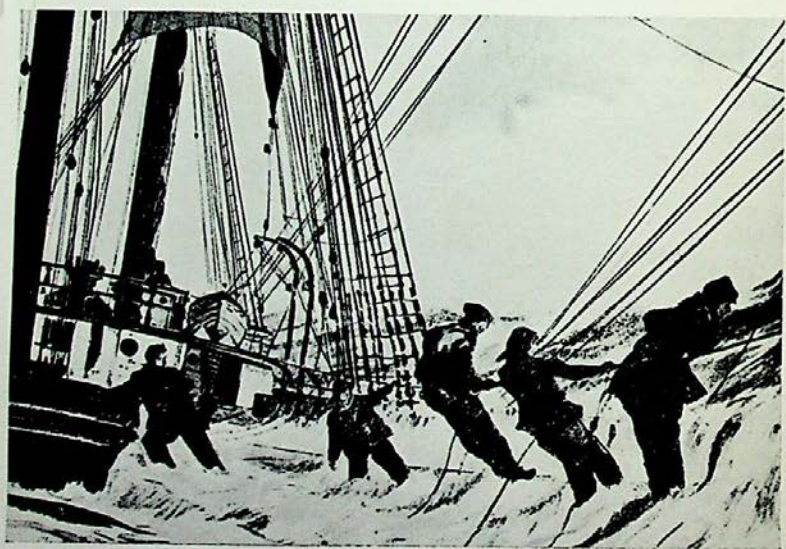
And just as we were nearly dressed the lamp fizzled

out in a splutter, leaving us to finish our toilet in darkness but for the faint glimmer now showing from outside. On deck we awaited our chance to go aft, though everywhere was one waste of water, and the drab dawn revealed to us the immensity of waves. It was a depressing and harrowing spectacle, and thus we began one more day.





Bracing in the yard. Men in oilskins



Heavy seas pouring over port side

A PACIFIC GALE

CHAPTER VI

ACROSS THE OCEAN

MOUNTAINOUS as the seas still raged, daylight seemed to dispel a little of their terrors yet it was impressive enough to watch the spray driving across the ship in blinding showers, that sometimes reached as high as the lowest yard-arm and obliterated the form of the ship altogether.

We were a dishevelled crowd, but on the poop deck we found the Port Watch looking very much the worse for wear. 'Trotsky,' alias Shaw, alias 'British Navy' (because he had once been a stoker therein), belonged to this weather-worn and weary Watch. He was a cheery fellow with always the ability to see the funny side of things, and ever ready to make some comic remark. His vocabulary was limited, and consisted chiefly of words that would look ugly in print. Moreover he had lost his sou'wester, which was upsetting; yet there he was hauling away and working with the best spirit. His swearing could be ignored—it meant nothing—but he was a fine man who helped to keep things 'sunny side up' during hard occasions, and I admired him immensely.

Now barely had our Watch arrived aft than we were set to haul on the braces, but it was no easy matter trying to get a foothold on decks that heeled at impossible angles. There was precious little to which we could hang with any reliance. The rail along the

gangway from bridge to poop had lifted and could not be trusted ; and even the handrail on the lee side of the chart-house had given, so that also would endure no strain. Nevertheless, stumbling, slipping, sliding, and falling about each other, we managed to haul and haul, inch by inch, till the yards came round.

But that was only the beginning. The lower mizzen-topsail must now be taken in. This was the last which was still set on the mizzen-mast, so that after it had been stowed the four-masted *Olivebank* would be running under fore and main lower topsails and a fore staysail : that is to say, only three sails out of a possible twenty-six. That, I think, shows pretty accurately the force with which the wind was blowing, and you may imagine the contemplation of having to go aloft in this weather, even to such a moderate height, was not pleasant. To take in a sail, heavy with the wet, and fight it into submission, seemed a poor kind of sport for early morning.

But there was no alternative, so next we all began heaving on clewlines and buntlines, lifting the weather side of a weighty bellying sail to the yard-arm, and then attacked the lee side. We had sprung for the shaking rigging at the order, 'All hands ! Up and make fast !' and then climbed out along the yard, but it was cruelly impressive to note the boiling sea, wherein it appeared scarcely credible that any ship whatsoever could survive. The wind continued merciless and, whilst we were climbing up, blew us flat against the ratlines. At length, toiling with every bit of our strength, we surprised ourselves by the speed with which we got the sail rolled up on top of the yard and made fast. By this time it was broad daylight, and the full savage wildness of the ocean scene was revealed to us.

Nothing was wanting to complete the feeling of awe and wonder, a sense of man's utter inferiority in the presence of Nature's anger. Would the gear stand it? Already the stay from the jigger-mast to the mizzen-mast was very slack and snapping furiously. Blocks and tackle were hitting the masts and yard-arms with alarming reports. As the ship rolled and the water gushed away from the storm-gates in the scuppers, the iron doors clanged with a report as of big guns.

Everything that could impress the senses of hearing and seeing did so with emphasis. From time to time the seas leapt over the fo'c'sle head, as well as the two deck-houses. Always the decks were full of water, which rushed madly from side to side as the ship lurched. To be caught in one of these swirls, unless one jumped for the life-lines, meant being washed clean off one's feet down into the scuppers. There it would be either a broken limb, or one might be swept clean over the side.

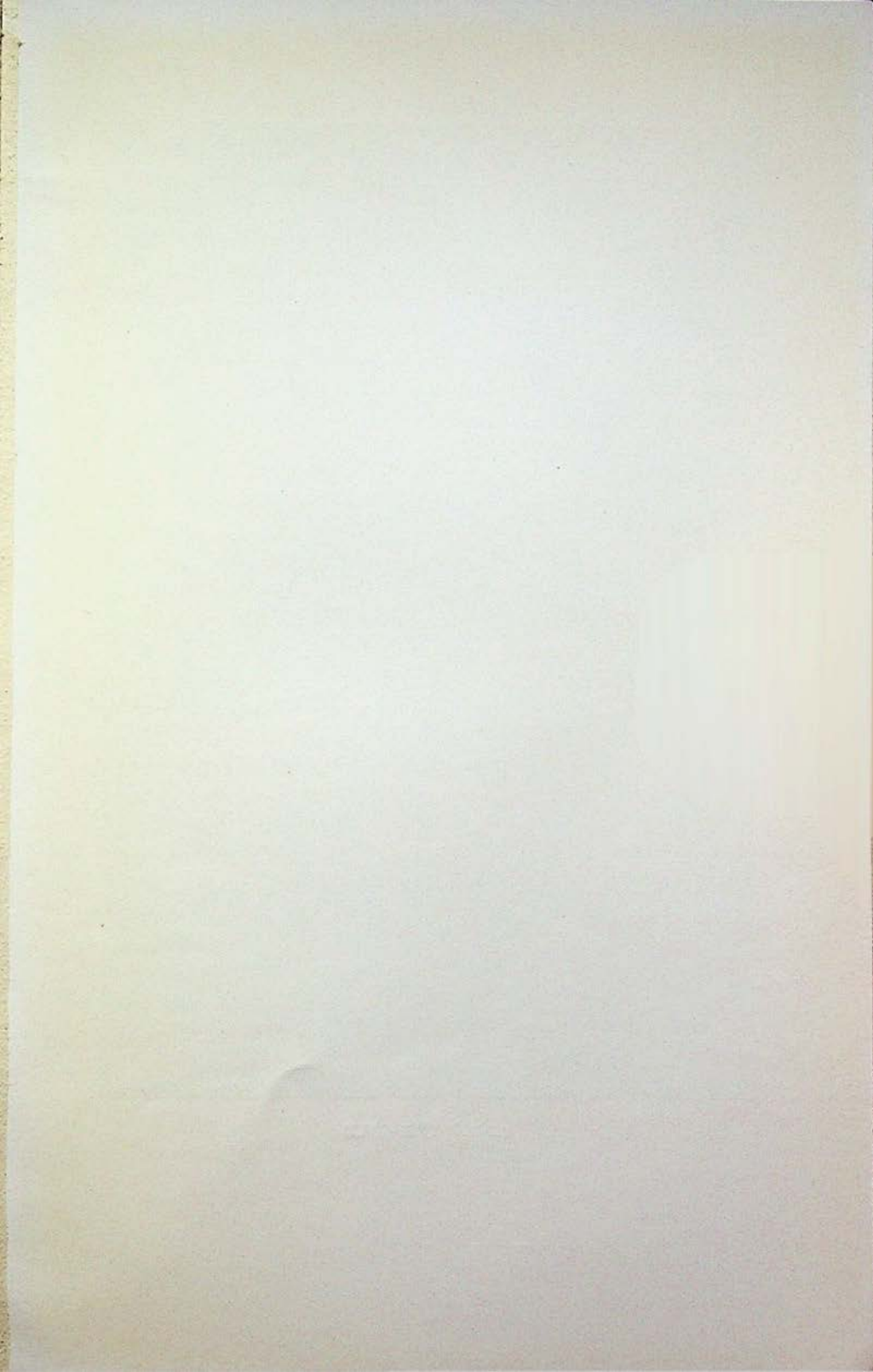
As if all this were not enough, the rain drove down in sheets from a grey-black sky, blotting out the horizon, whilst the wave-crests were whipped into white foam. The great problem for us, amid the liveliness and slipperiness of the deck, was how to do our work without being swept off our feet; and the big-hearted Shaw was caught this way. He was in the act of 'climbing' the heeling deck, and about to lend a hand on the braces, when all of a sudden he lost his foothold and slid down deck on his back. It happened like a flash before he or any of us quite realised, and then he fetched up with his thigh against a stanchion. Stout fellow though this ex-stoker undoubtedly was, the nasty crack knocked him right out. We slid to his assistance; he couldn't rise, but between us we dragged him into the

chart-house, and there he lay on the floor groaning in agony.

The 'Old Man' came at once to find out how much 'Trotsky' really was injured, and as the former stepped inside closing the door behind, it cast a strange spell over us. Indeed, coming on the top of our recent experiences, it almost unnerved the whole crowd. We were fond of our shipmate, we missed his cheeriness, and we realised something of what the situation signified. For an accident aboard a sailing ship is a serious matter where there is neither doctor nor wireless, and it must be weeks before the next port is reached. The wonder is that there had not been a dozen such accidents, and that several of us had not been drowned, so perhaps we were more than fortunate. He recovered gradually.

Much is expected of the Captain in all circumstances, and here he must needs act as ship's medical man; but he perceived the condition of our mentality and had the wisdom to revive our weariness of heart. Soon afterwards he 'spliced the mainbrace' and each of us received a noggin of rum, which went down jolly well, giving us that warmth which we badly required; yet it had the effect generally of making us all sick. The reason, I believe, was that our tongues and throats being rough and sore with salt, the mixing upset our stomachs.

Shaw's accident had been the climax which synchronised with the peak of the storm; for presently there came a lull and a sudden rift in the heavens which betokened a change. The black skies lowered again, rain and wind beat up as furiously as ever, and for a brief spell we wondered what next would follow: but the welcome news got round that the glass was now rising, the wind was veering from south-east to south,





AFTER THE GALE

and at six o'clock, the Port Watch having been sent below, we were back again in 'peace routine.' The same old beastly jobs followed of fetching water to the Cook, cleaning out pigsties and lavatories, until Eight Bells sounded and we went tired but hungry to breakfast. Thank Heaven! There was no lack of food. And then we turned into our bunks just as a gleam of sunshine was shyly entering the fo'c'sle. I was never so pleased to welcome it, and then we fell asleep.

During the afternoon we managed to set staysails, and this extra canvas steadied her in the heavy sea that was still running, yet it was tiring work for us on deck—wading, struggling against the violent rushing of waters, ever jumping into the rigging. Moreover, it was now bitterly cold. My feet were wet and there had been no time for me to change before standing my two hours at the wheel with Hellberg. From my feet the cold crept up my body, and when the time arrived for returning to my bunk I still failed to revive circulation, in spite of wearing sweaters and trousers. Chest, stomach, and shoulders never seemed to get the chill expelled. In spite of all this, however, not one of us caught so much as a cold, and the reason may be attributed presumably to the fact that fresh air, sea-water, plus hard exercise, form the finest protection against such ills.

Sailing ships nowadays are nearly as rare as strawberries at Christmas, but a few readers may have been fortunate enough to have sighted one of the genuine old-timers at sea. Twenty-five years ago it was possible to come across them coming up the English Channel with a fair wind; and even up till the year 1915 there were still plenty of barques about. But the war sent many of this breed to destruction, and the occasions

nowadays for sighting an ocean-going vessel proceeding under sail are very few indeed. Never was a more beautiful spectacle than such as this, with her white sails gleaming in the sunshine and her noble hull lifting gently to the swell.

Those who have been privileged to remember the living picture of some stately wind-driven trader will associate her with southern blue seas, sharks, flying fish, tropical moonlight, sun-speckled wavelets, and all the background of romance as presented in the story-books. But they forget, perhaps, the hard realism, the discomforts and dangers. 'Sailor's life! Why! That's an easy existence! Nothing to do but let the wind carry you along whilst you sit and idle away the hours.' Often since coming home I have been asked: 'Does water really come on deck? And do you have to work by night as well as day?' Then some one else will insist: 'I can't imagine what you do with yourselves. Of course that's all nonsense about sixty-foot waves.'

But in this black south-east gale which blew up in about Lat. 50° S., and Long. 140° W., we had a full answer to such queries. In these latitudes we had no royals bent, no gaff-topsail, cro'jack, or flying jib: these were used only in the Trade Winds and would not be thought of until such day as we changed our heavy storm canvas for summer sails. Nor would the time be ripe till we had got north of the Falkland Islands. During this blow had been emphasised, yet never mentioned, the plain unalterable truth that a sailing ship is no place for grumblers, for shirkers, for people who are self-centred. A sailor's first instinct is to help his mates whenever he can. His life in the fo'c'sle is based on the principle of mutual trust, of share-and-

share-alike ; and his contempt is unbounded for the man who locks his sea-chest lest any of his property be stolen. Between sailors as sailors there is no stealing, but there exists a fo'c'sle code which differs from any land code.

For instance, if there is sugar in the galley and the Cook happens to be up for'ard giving slush to his pigs, then as likely as not the sugar will have disappeared when he looks for it to sweeten the fruit soup. Similarly, if there is a choice bit of sail-cloth in the sail-locker, and the Mate chances not to be around, you can make a safe bet that before long one of the crew will be turning that cloth into a kit-bag. In a sentence, it may be summed up that whatever belongs to the shipowner a sailor has no scruples about purloining for his own convenience : but whatever belongs to a shipmate—even be it so small an article as a piece of twine—this must be treated with respect and, if found astray, returned to the man who is the rightful possessor.

There can be, I believe, little doubt that happiness and efficiency in a ship can mean one and the same thing. We in the Starboard Watch were always singing, and rather prided ourselves with a sort of kindly toleration that we were the boys who got things done smartly. The Port Watch may have worked as hard as we, but if we were always singing, they were not. Certainly it was we who ate more, slept less, laughed more ; although our numbers were now seven as against the other Watch's nine, we seemed always to get the starboard side of the mainsail furled, made fast, and ourselves back on deck again before the Port Watch had got their first man over the futtock shrouds.

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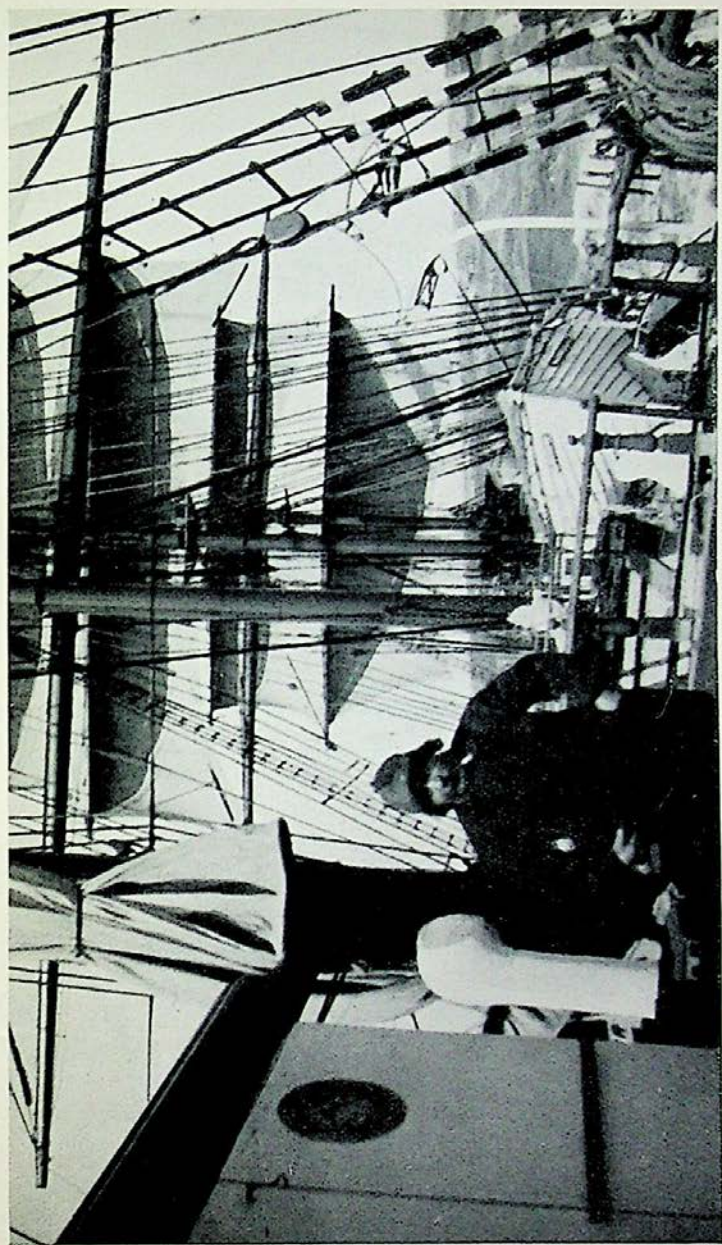
All this attitude of the Starboard Watch may have been just mere prejudice, but at any rate a keen, good-natured rivalry hurt no one and benefited the ship.

Now that the heavy weather had departed we had been able to set the mainsail, but at sunset all hands had been called to furl it. The 'Old Man' was evidently again playing for safety, and it was also apparent that he was worried; for damp, cold, rainy weather had set in and it was the possibility of hitting ice that created this concern. In his anxiety he had become likewise absent-minded. He began searching for his pipe here, there, all over his part of the ship, but with no luck. Then the Second Mate inquired what he was looking for—and laughed.

'Your pipe's in your mouth,' he pointed.

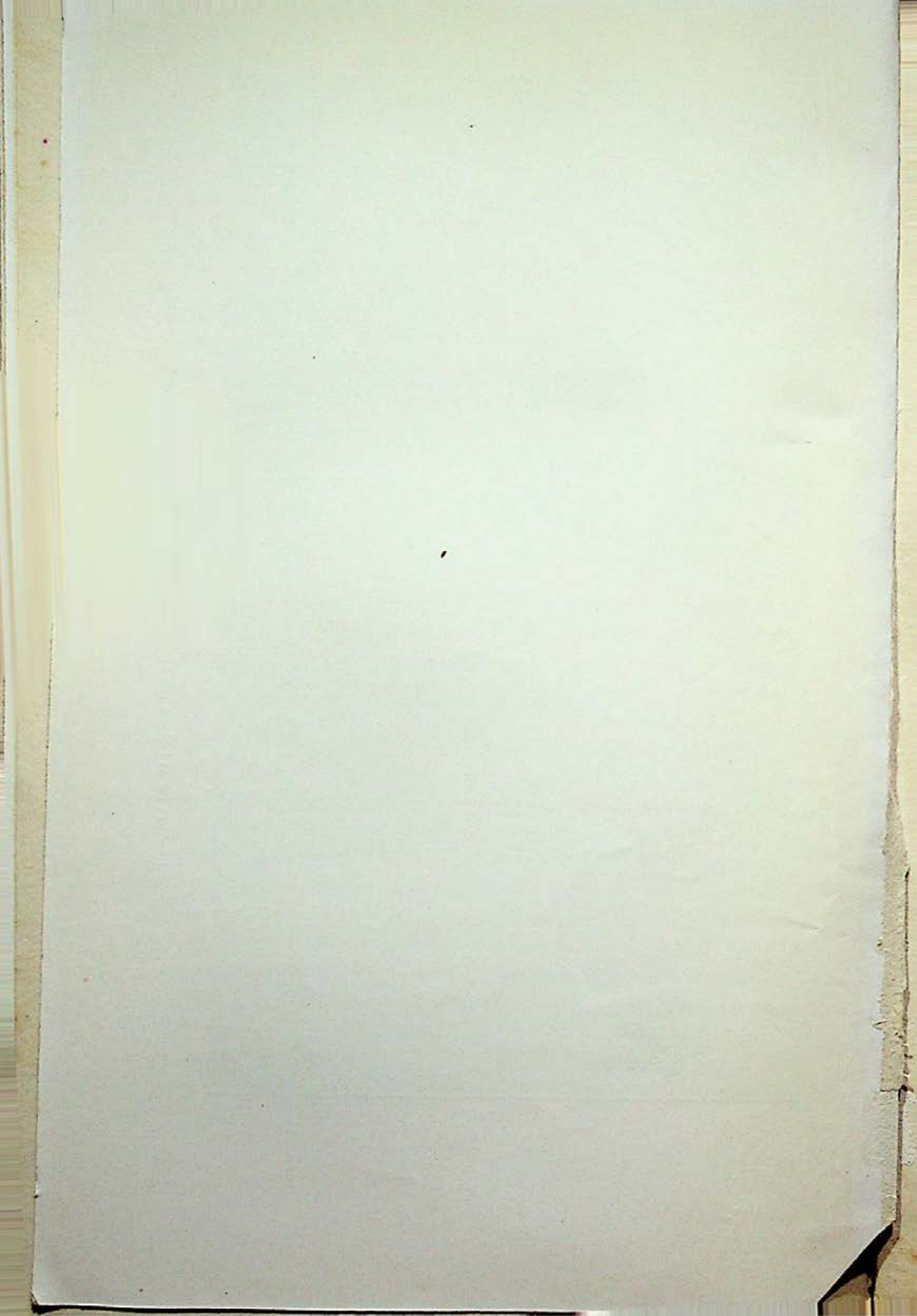
After the gale the wind had flown round to north and the weather became warm though clammy, which betokened rain, so this time it had come thick and drizzly, shutting out the world but accentuating the suspense of striking an iceberg without warning. Up on the fo'c'sle head it was a weird business keeping a look-out. The wind died away, a silence hung over ship and sea; the only sounds were the creaking of blocks, the licking of swell against hull as the *Olivebank* rolled, and the drip-drip of soft rain on deck. Occasionally in this lonely part of the Pacific would be heard the call of sea-birds away to the south. It was not altogether unlike the short staccato crying of the moorhen which one hears over ponds and marshes at home, but there it seemed friendly and cheerful. Out here, however, with the still Antarctic continent of ice not so impossibly far away, the cry made a different impression. It created a sense of indescribable sadness, a feeling of loneliness.

During the night the damp fog found its way into every one and everything aboard, so that we all felt a kind of rheumatic chill in our bodies. The 'Old Man'



THE POOP DECK

Looking for'ard along the starboard side. The ' Old Man ' in the foreground



continued to pace the poop, peering out into the thickness, first to port and then to starboard. He had put on his leather hat lined with black fur and having two long flaps that fell over his ears. Doubtless it was comforting and warm to wear, yet it made him look extraordinarily like a seal.

We were thankful at last to have a fair breeze, since that south-easter had been almost a head-wind for our course to Cape Horn. So well did the *Olivebank* at present like the freshening norther that during one hour of the night she did ten and a half knots, which was about her maximum nowadays. Beyond that rate she became difficult to steer, and when any more wind drove her it was difficult to shorten sail with so few hands aboard. Most sailormen would say that it was a pretty tough proposition, and call her a 'hard case.' We should have agreed with them, had it not been that we possessed a good Skipper, a couple of Mates who were really human, food though lacking in choiceness yet plenteous, and (perhaps above all) a bright happy crowd in the fo'c'sle.

There was one item that was missing: we should have enjoyed seeing the 'Old Man' occasionally ease up and have a jolly good laugh. It would have done us all considerable benefit. I know the grave responsibility which rested on his shoulders, nevertheless we shared some of that load, but it seems easier to bear those things with a smile here and there, brightening up the dark days. We nicknamed him 'Buster' after the film star 'Buster Keaton,' reputed never to have smiled in all his life. Out of the grey pall of fog and rain, dim, shapeless forms would suddenly show themselves ahead, and occasionally we received a momentary shock thinking that we sighted danger. And then the excite-

ment would subside, there was nothing except sheer mistiness, so we proceeded on our way.

Dawn was due to break between 2.30 and 3 o'clock, but to-day there was no sunrise apparent: merely one murkiness gave way to another of lighter tone, whilst the yellow light from the chart-house aft spread the only glimmer of hope in a mournful world. Up aloft the royal masts were still enveloped in mist, but it was the same ahead, astern, and on both sides. At last Eight Bells was struck, so we could get below, though it was not too grand there. The lines of damp clothes hanging up in a forlorn optimism of drying; the floorboards damp and cold; the bulkheads clammy and rusty; the ooze and water which dropped into one's bunk and stained one's pyjamas or made blankets and mattress feel more like sponges—these were scarcely the characteristics of homeliness.

But why complain?

We didn't—except inwardly and secretly. It was useless uttering remarks about these matters: for they would have been monotonous subjects. If I had to turn out again in less than four hours, I used not to undress fully, but slept in my damp socks so that they should at least be warm when the time came to 'rise and shine.' But they had been wet for days, and my body had become so full of rheumatic aches that these likewise had been accepted as part of the routine. Amid so much that was depressing to mind and spirits there must be some means for creating a happy contrast, but we had two separate sources. Firstly and principally, there remained ever in our minds the idea of Cape Horn being the climax of all our discomforts. When once past that corner, we all kept saying, everything would be well, we should be splendidly on our

way, and what welcome we should give to the Trade Winds ! Last trip (they told me) the *Olivebank* sailed from Melbourne to the Horn in forty days, but so far we had been less than half that time under way, and were making steady progress at a speed of eight to ten knots. We could not wish for much better than that, under the circumstances.

Our second means of sustaining enthusiasm was the gramophone record, which not merely encouraged us to sing about 'Happy Days,' but was also an encouragement when the time came round for turning out of our bunks. 'Say it to music !' Life did seem slightly less harsh when music was being made to fill the fo'c'sle, even if you hated to leave the one warm spot that was yours. Then, as a reward for not giving in to pessimistic broodings, the weather improved a little, visibility got better, no look-out was needed by day, the decks dried up, and even the fo'c'sle floor was not swishing about with water. We could even walk about this floor without having to wear sea-boots, whilst outside we could stand in the lee scuppers and haul braces without fear of being swept overboard.

One afternoon I was sitting in front of the galley fire waiting for a drop of hot washing-water when the Second Mate entered. He, too, began talking of the Trades as the object of a deep-water sailor's existence. After the treacherous regions of 60° S., and thereabouts, we should soon forget our troubles when we steered north into latitudes of fleecy clouds, blue skies, and warm sunlight. Thoughts such as these were like a tonic to all of us, and caused us to keep transporting our imaginations beyond the present environment some weeks ahead.

Personally, I was further encouraged because at

length my hands had begun to adapt themselves to their tasks and the blisters ceased. Some of the fellows, however, had commenced to develop boils on their bodies, due perhaps to the inferior standard of our food. In spite of the quantity there was little quality of nourishment, and sugar was now rationed to 1 lb. a week for each man. The margarine was so vile that I should have been ashamed to use it for lubricating a lorry. But the 5-lb. tin of ginger-nuts, which I had bought in Melbourne, proved a most useful purchase, though already nearly finished. It had given some relief to the apple soup—a most insipid greeny-yellow wash—which the Cook gave us with a frequency that seemed excessive.

We were perpetually so hungry and ready for any fare, that no food came amiss. We looked forward to meals, sleeping, and a calm week-end as the three most desirable items in life. At this period I was reading slowly and with delight *The Good Companions*, trying to make it last out, since there remained little else on board worth considering. Every sailor after a week or two at sea has experienced that intense longing to rest his eyes on simple country scenery, woods, hedges, fields—anything but the unbroken expanse of waves. This exactly expressed how I was feeling, for the memories of countryside and home made me almost sick with desire to be back, and sometimes I would wake up in this damp fo'c'sle to wonder absurdly if the post had been !

When matters reached a stage of unusual discomfort, and I was wet, cold, hungry ; when the skies outside the fo'c'sle seemed dull and sad ; I used to think out pleasant plans for spending my initial few hours ashore. The very first thing (I promised myself) would be a

hot bath. Then I would feed and drink, but not abnormally. And next I would sleep, and sleep, and sleep. To bathe in real hot water unlimited, to have meals off china plates on a clean table-cloth, to drink good English beer out of a glass and partake of real English fare—this would be marvellous. But to sleep between white smooth clean sheets on a spring mattress would be the pleasantest of all. And when I could sleep no more, I would walk for miles over the green meadows and hills, through gay woods rich with spring flowers. By that time I should feel clean and fit to seek home, gaze restfully on lawns, and listen to the song of birds.¹

But how could one make plans whilst still the wrong side of Cape Horn? Who could say which would be our final port? Belfast? Dublin? Liverpool? Cardiff? It might even be London, Hamburg, or

¹ Similarly, Bill and Shaw had their own plans for spending their first hours ashore. Whilst I preferred to keep my musings to myself, these two men made their intentions public, and often I used to hear 'Trotsky' advising Koskinnen.

'Beer! Beer! Beer! Them's my plans, Kossy,' he kept on repeating. 'And soon as this ruddy hooker's alongside the quay, me and Bill will have our elbows on some bloody counter swabbin' it down. By the *pint*, did yer say? Not by pints, Kossy; not by quarts, neither. But by the bleedin' gallon! . . . Just to dream of it! That glorious, golden, sparklin', foamin' ale agurglin' down into yer innards! . . . An' 'ere we are aboard this bloomin' submarine! Bloody miles from home or a "pub," and maybe never to taste a ruddy pint again. Just think of it!' And in sheer despair he would relapse into a moody silence.

It was about this time that I received a commission from Bill and Shaw to paint them a picture.

'Claude,' approached the latter, 'me and Bill wants you to paint us something.'

'Well. Of what?'

'We wants a picture, as true to life as you can get it, of a foamin' tankard of ale. And, mind yer, none of yer pewter tankards. Wot we wants is a regular glass pint mug, so's we can see the bubbles goin' up.'

'But how much will you give me for it?'

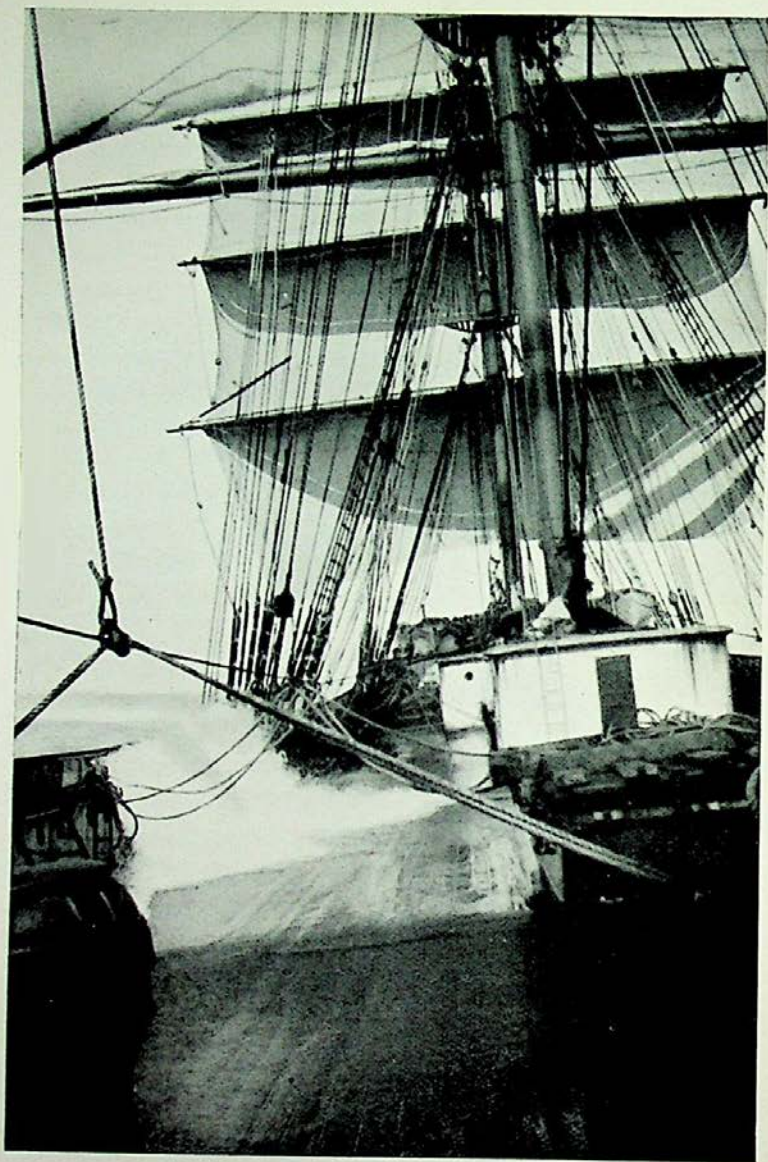
'A couple of pints when we gits ashore.'

I never executed that commission.

Dunkirk. If only it were London, this would suit me splendidly, and often in my mind I had pictured coming up the Thames taking in the last sails, gazing on the shores of Essex and Kent from high up in the rigging.

But from these musings and anticipations I was summoned to harsh reality when we were ordered to shift cargo. I have no complaint against that job, yet one needed to be a Goliath. I soon discovered that the lifting of 200-lb. bags was beyond my ability, and it depressed me quite a lot to perceive fellows much smaller and slimmer than myself moving this weight of wheat on their backs with the utmost ease. I believe that when one knows the trick there is nothing much in it, and somehow six of us during the morning moved some three or four hundred of these bags. My shipmates told me they considered them only small sacks!

Anyway, I was mighty glad to take my trick at the wheel from twelve o'clock, by which time I was well-nigh exhausted. Perhaps matters below might have been easier but for a badly bruised leg, black-and-blue all down the shin, a souvenir of the great storm. Whenever a bag of wheat fell against me there was an unpleasant reminder that in the darkness of that terrible night I had fallen full length over a grindstone that had got adrift owing to the ship's heavy rolling. But the greatest casualty of the storm had been suffered by the *Lady Olivebank* herself. This figurehead had lost both an arm and part of her starboard side, so that she looked a sad sight. Our lifeboat, however, had been repaired, made shipshape, replaced on its chocks, and well lashed down. In fact, had we needed it in an emergency, we should all have been at the bottom of the sea before the boat could have been released.



ROLLING TOWARDS THE HORN

By the way, during the night of the storm, Jim, alone and seasick in his bunk, quite thought we had taken to the boats and that he was the only person left on board. Boats? Not one could have lived in those seas, even if we had been able to launch them. I'm very certain that ere they could have been got over the side, there would have been only bits of broken wood. It was lucky that night, too, nobody happened to be on the look-out when the big wave came aboard that shifted the boat. Unquestionably any one on the fo'c'sle head would have been either killed or swept to death. The Mate afterwards said that never had he seen so much loose water before on a ship's deck.

So the days were rolling by ; three weeks passed and we must be a good halfway to the Horn. A strange lot of ruffians we had become as a result of our rough mode of life and crude existence. But a curious national demarcation by now had manifested itself. Shaw (who was now recovered from his accident), Frank, and myself were the only three on board who chanced to be English, and we three remained the only men who had taken the trouble to shave since leaving Melbourne. Of course it is arguable that this was because the trio did not include one genuine sailor, whereas the real A.B.s kept their beards on till the Trades. Such tough guys did they appear that women or children would have run for their lives. In particular, I remember 'Bill,' an Australian, who for all the world resembled 'Bill Sikes.' Had I met him ashore with his gold teeth I should have been afraid. This life aboard the *Olivebank* had a powerful tendency to turn men into animals, and one had always to keep fighting it. We three were also the only members of the fo'c'sle who regularly cleaned their teeth, and whilst personally

I shave but once a week, this had the effect of sustaining a clean and healthy self-respect.

Jim, of course, was reckoned as more Australian than English. When I came down from the wheel about 7 p.m. I found him having tea very quietly and sulkily. I spoke to him but he made no answer. Evidently he had received from the older inhabitants of the fo'c'sle that 'telling off' which had been promised him. This loose-limbed, self-assertive lad possessed little sense of proportion, and had no idea how to treat his elders and superiors. His stale accent, half Kentish Cockney and half Australian, his appalling habits, and utter unconsciousness of life's finer appeal, were difficult to tolerate. He was always impressing on me that he was 'straight from college,' that he knew all about such things as trigonometry and mathematics, that 'me Dad' used to send him from table if he forgot to say 'thanks.' It was Jim who also rubbed into me that manners make the man. Nevertheless, this was the youth who ate his soup with the point of his dinner-knife, kept his mouth wide open throughout the meal, and spent the rest of his free watch sucking his teeth. I can put up with much, but Jim was for me the limit of endurance. None of us could imagine why he ever came to sea, and the only answer was in his own words :

'Me Dad said it would moike a man o' me.'

Perhaps it might !

We were now, at the end of three weeks, in about Lat. 50° S., Long. 145° W. A swell was coming up, the ship began to roll rather heavily again with the noise of many creakings and strainings, accompanied by the sound of oilskins sliding backwards and forwards across the bulkheads. To-day we heard that we were

to have no more biscuits this side of the Horn. The news created great disappointment. It seemed to signify more bad weather and that we must save what we had in case the Cook were unable to do any baking. But what should we eat in the night watches if there were no biscuits? I wish to say nothing about Captain Gustav Erikson, the owner of *Olivebank* and a number of other sailing ships, but I would like him to know that had he come into our fo'c'sle the men would have given him a very hostile reception. We were carrying only a ton and a half of potatoes for this voyage, whereas they said twice that amount was aboard on the voyage out. I do not believe that Captain Erikson would rather kill a man than lose a halfpenny, though this was how my messmates described him. They spent part of their free time and imaginative ability in devising all manner of torture for him, but at last they solved two problems simultaneously. What to do with gramophone needles that had been used too long? Why, employ them for tattooing the owner, then lash him to the main truck, and leave him there at the masthead.

This was the kind of sailor-talk that went on. It was, of course, wild and irresponsible, and accounted for by the strain of nerves no less than the indifferent food. It seemed more like three months since that day when we dropped the Melbourne pilot, but we should be much more fed-up with things before the voyage ended. Already there had been times when moments dragged by with deadly sluggishness. At others there seemed an awful hopelessness that four months of sailing would ever end. It was too large a conception that any finish could be possible. At first the novelty of surroundings and occupation kept one eager and

happy, but then followed the realisation of what monotony at sea can exactly mean.

But I was sure that one could accustom oneself to monotony as to any other condition, and hoped that the weeks and months would fly by. To-day there came a burst of sunshine that was positively brilliant for such latitudes, and with it arrived an invigorating wind. It felt more like an English March, but by night the wind was blowing fresh from the south, a lump of sea was rising, and occasionally a lot of water would come aboard. Still, it was not too bad a wind for us, and in spite of the fact that we had no royals bent, no mizzen course, and no t'gallant staysails, and had only our storm canvas set (excepting the spanker), we were doing our ten and a half knots again.

Suddenly two blasts of the whistle shrieked and summoned us to take in mizzen upper t'gallant. Frank, Hellberg, and myself went up and out on the yard, but the sail to-day was dry and easy to stow. In fact we should have completed the job in about ten minutes if Hellberg (who was determined to work independently) had not left us and gone down on deck. He was 'the monkey wrench in the works' at this job. We merely wished that he would have co-operated with our efforts and taken in sail whilst we passed the gaskets round. As it turned out, Frank and I had to do the work nearly all over again. The oaths which were let loose in the darkness would have been sufficient excuse for the moon to hide her face behind a curtain of clouds.

CHAPTER VII

THE VENTURE OF VOYAGING

THE difference between a voyage in a sailing ship and a voyage in a passenger liner consists not merely in regard to means of propulsion but most chiefly in respect of adventure. In another chapter I have mentioned the tramp steamer as having something in common with the old canvas-driven vessels, and this is perfectly true though in a lesser degree.

The modern commercial ship, whether using coal or oil, takes nothing like the risks of her more ancient sisters, and everything is carried out according to long-arranged plan. Even in the tramps have men become almost as mechanical as the machinery itself, so that one Watch on the whole is much the same as any other, and so long as the engines go round there is nothing distinctive between yesterday and to-day, with scarcely any opportunity for one man to exhibit whatever superiority of character he may possess over his companions.

But the ocean-traversing ship under sail is one of the finest instances of trusting to luck, which is merely another simile for adventure. Every one of her voyages is in a category of its own, and of an individual pattern. Essentially each trip is a separate drama, with all the crises and the grand climax which a comedy or tragedy contains. There is an entire absence of the ready-made, the true-to-type ; and this applies not less also

to the persons in that drama. Few experiences to-day survive for calling up all that is best in a man ; few vocations afford such an opportunity for self-discipline, unselfishness, patience, and physical courage, as life aboard a windjammer. At times it is part-comedy, at others it is whole-tragedy, but there is no denying that it is brimful of action and characterisation. For example, I submit that even half an hour along a t'gallant yard provides in abundance the very stuff out of which great dramas are woven. You may know a man for twenty years ashore amid all the complexity of civilisation, yet never become perfectly acquainted with his real character : but let the same neighbour be your fo'c'sle messmate for a month, and be sent aloft with you to furl sail on a dark blowy night, and you will not be long in doubt as to whether he is yellow or a real man.

A sailing ship brings out beyond all disguise and concealment the best and worst in human nature and strips a man's soul naked, so that such vessels as the *Olivebank* have been like the stage of a theatre that has produced innumerable plays but with a change of cast for nearly every production. The pity of it is that so many acts of supreme gallantry and pluck have been performed without any audience or narrator ; yet within these vessels there is locked up one long series of thrilling incidents which are the impenetrable secrets of seafaring. They have gone on accumulating through years, though the actors themselves have continued to change and pass on.

It would be possible to fill a good-sized book with the life-history of the *Olivebank* alone, and to show the incredible tragedies for which she has been the stage. Of all the many crews who served in her and left her,

not one ever departed without some vivid impression of having assisted in some full-sized thriller. This barque was once at sea for 152 days; she always had an evil reputation for steering, and about a couple of years before I joined her they had to lengthen her rudder: but the trouble was never quite cured. She has been posted as missing, she has been through so many narrow escapes of all sorts that no one would believe one ship could be such a glutton for danger. She has nearly starved her crews, and in November 1928 arrived in Melbourne with her flag half-mast high for the dead, most of her survivors suffering from beri-beri.

Truly the *Olivebank* has staged some extraordinary surprises, and there could be no guessing what unexpected situations she would have ready for us before we gained the Atlantic.

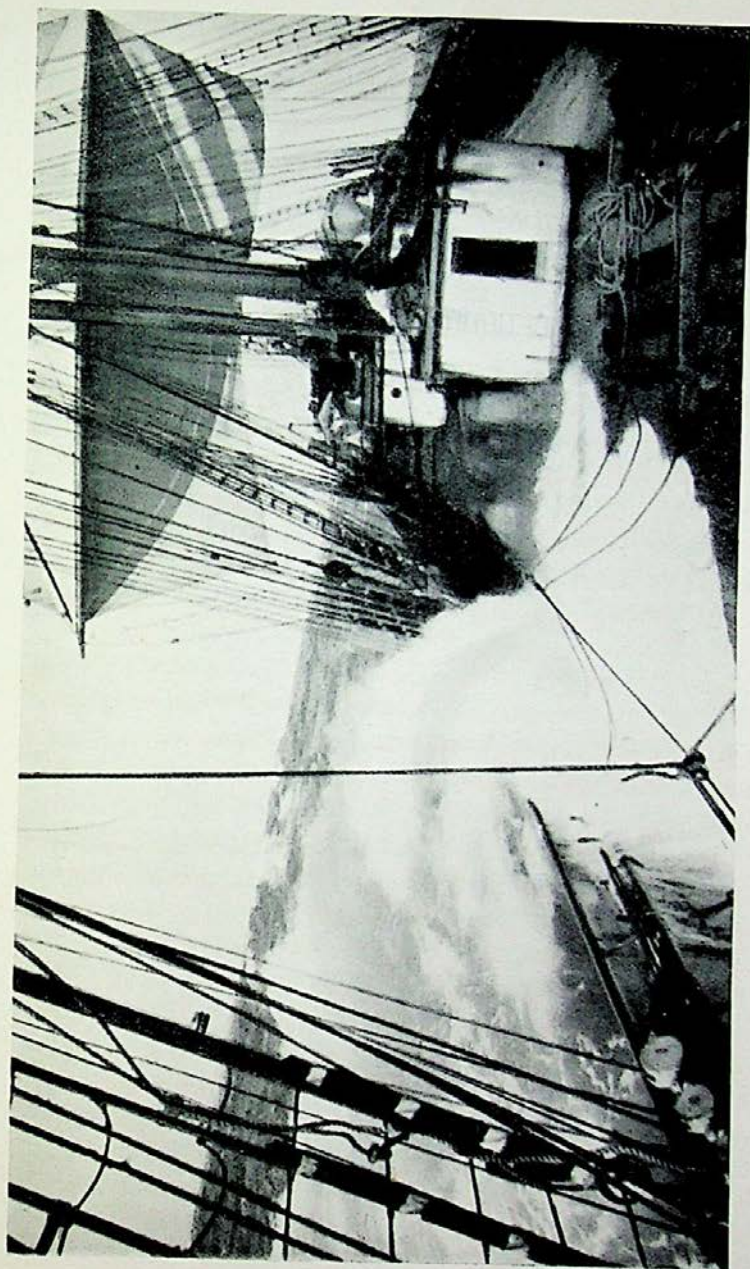
At present there was not much variety in that scene of greyness and heavy swell, and occasionally as the south-west wind changed a point or two we would brace yards and square up. We were taking advantage of this fair breeze, and occasionally there would be a couple of hundred miles or so wiped off the long lone track towards Cape Horn. But it was becoming perceptibly colder, so that one had great difficulty to keep warm in our bunks. If one woke up, it would be necessary to walk round heavily to get the stiffness out of the joints. By day we tried lining sea-boots with newspaper, an experiment that was unsuccessful, since they continued to be clammy and deathly cold.

Happiness arrived with the week-end, when I must have slept the best part of thirty-six hours. I had the Watch on Saturday from 4 till 8 a.m., which meant that I was free thereafter up to Monday apart from those simple jobs of look-out, wheel, and 'policeman.' The

wind very considerably was steady ; thus whilst we were always ready to come on deck at the summons of 'two whistles,' yet I was able to spend Saturday afternoon dozing, reading, sewing, and generally having a leisurely time. We were making up for the last gale and preparing for the next.

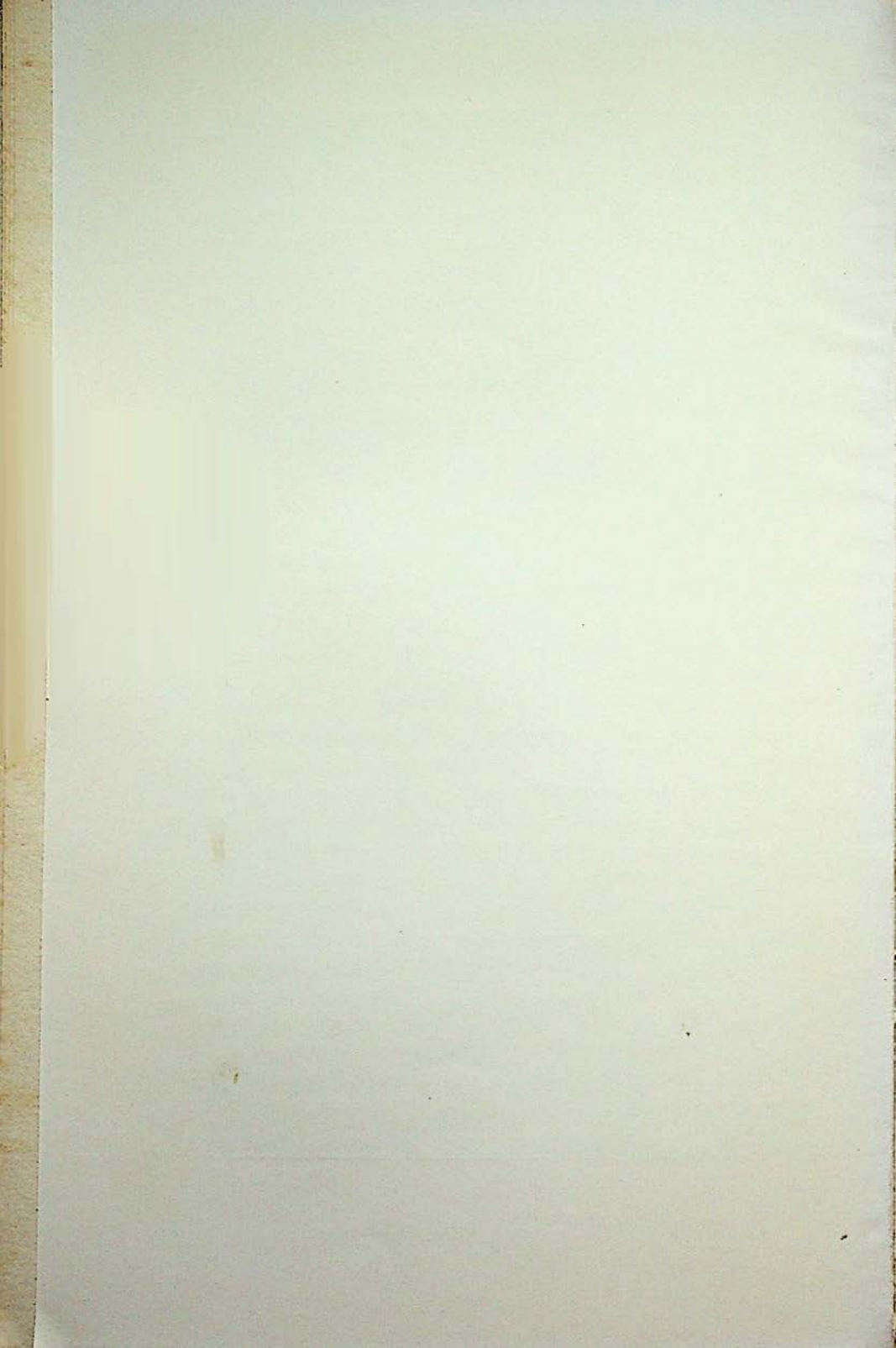
Now and again a big sea would come aboard green and solid as she gave a heavy roll, and then an avalanche of water swept aft in its customary vehemence. That sort of thing no longer surprised any of us. But, now that we had been under way for twenty-three days, the 'Old Man' began to get fussy and particular about the steersman keeping the ship dead on her compass course. We found that when there was a big swell and the wind abeam, it was the devil's own job to keep her from luffing up to windward ; so in practice some of us used to keep her a couple of points away from the wind. This went on, with the result that our noon position made us thirty miles north of where we should have been. The Captain showed his great annoyance, and even made sarcastic remarks to Koskinnen, who was the best steersman in the ship.

We were running east on about the line Lat. 50° S., and to-day were in Long. 130° W. It was evidently the Captain's intention to carry on with this course until making the coast of South America and then go straight down south for the Horn. Who could blame him for being anxious to have accurate steering ? We now had another 3500 miles before reaching that notorious Cape, and with fair winds this would mean the best part of three more weeks, yet there could be no certainty or safe prediction. On the last passage from Melbourne to the Horn the *Olivebank* took forty-five days, and this seems to be about the average. If, however, we



HEAVY SEA!

A wave lops on board at the waist



could maintain our present speed, we ought to do it in forty days, which would be a pretty good effort. Ships have spent longer than this, and (for example) two years previously the *Grace Harwar* had been fifty-seven days reaching the Horn from Wallaroo.

Forty days ! Nearly six weeks ! Seventeen more days to do : more than a fortnight ! It was a long period when you lay in your bunk and thought of home with an emotion that could be real and deep without being mere sentimentalism. I pinned up some photographs of home, Mother, and relatives. It now cheered me and put fresh courage for the seventeen days that must be borne. Visions of domestic contentment, the scent of flowers, all suggested themselves most vividly to the imagination in spite of this damp, drab fo'c'sle. And it pleased me to transport myself across the world. Plenard, the Belgian, was a dreamer too, who loved to call up memories of his snug home tucked away under a vast background of wood, and situated on a rock rising sheer from the River Meuse over which the house kept guard.

I found myself just then longing for photographs of English towns, landscape, or any home news. In the big sea-chest, which is our 'library,' I searched but in vain : it was full of old magazines and dog-eared books mostly in Swedish. Here and there came an English thriller, an adventure story, even some weak love-story. I could find nothing which would provide me with real pleasure to read.

And here I realised that however much one might try to forget it, there was in this fo'c'sle a big void gaping. Frankly, I had begun to feel the absence of any refinement and culture in such rough seafaring existence. My messmates and shipmates were fine fellows, but

I could not speak their language and they had little wish to express themselves happily in mine. Nor was it any good pretending that their outlook was different in more than one category. I yearned for the companionship of some kindred person to whom I could talk freely, and with whom ideas could be exchanged. There was no one aboard who could share my thoughts, so I kept them to myself and, during the grey hours of early morning when no one was about, I tramped the decks in lonely silence, still belonging to the *Olivebank's* crew, yet preserving all the while an intense individuality. I am not sure that this is not the most severe sort of loneliness.

'Never less alone than when alone !' as the old motto reminds us.

At last the first month passed by and found us in Lat. 51° S., Long. 106° W., with strong winds from SW. and W. Days of driving rain and high seas, during most of which we were running under single topsails and foresail, with occasionally a staysail and upper topsails on fore and main. The waves were veritable mountains, hackneyed though the expression may be, and the decks never failed to be full of swirling waters ; but it was the rain which drenched us and kept us perpetually chilled. Generally two men were now at the wheel, and often a look-out was stationed on the fo'c'sle head by day. It was a cheerless duty to stand up there in the pelting rain with no other shelter than the capstan, which was a poor sort of thing to rely upon. During these depressing periods the galley was for us a good friend. In spite of a man being kept busy bailing it out, the Cook usually managed to provide us with plenty of so-called food.

Food ? Well, at home we should hurl it at the pigs.

Persson was saying that he read in a newspaper the other day an advertisement: 'Ship's food for sale. Very low price. Excellent fodder for pigs.' For all that, we had to eat something, if only to fill our stomachs, but it is about time that those responsible should be refrained from taking advantage of men's misfortune. A sailor's life is hard and hungry, so food-stores are shipped such as only seafarers or pigs could swallow and digest. No ordinary human being employed ashore could continue to do his work on this kind of sustenance. Persson showed me his arm: the boils had already begun.

He laughed. But it was really no matter for joking: these boils can easily develop into blood-poisoning if not treated with reasonable care. My medicine chest was continually being of service to some of my companions, and I was always tearing up linen for bandages. I wished that I had brought a bigger supply. Finally Persson's boil alarmed me, and there was a thin red line all the way up his arm. I advised him to go to the Skipper, and after some persuasion he went aft reluctantly. The 'Old Man' gave him a poultice made of porridge! To me it seemed curious that such treatment should be prescribed for a boil, yet it had the desired effect. Next morning a good deal of the matter had come away, though the arm was badly swollen and very painful.

It would have amused or angered any medical man to have watched the primitive methods of rendering aid. Koskinnen in his rough manner pinched Persson's arm for him, and got most of the stuff away. Then we bathed the wound in 'Condy's,' but the poisoning still remained partially. With no more scientific instrument than a match, Persson therefore poked about to

extract the last bit of matter. Finally, with the aid of his fingers and accompanied by a loud cheer, he pulled out of his arm a piece of string about half an inch long. Persson was a brave fellow. During the whole of this episode the pain must have been acute, yet he never made a murmur. Only once he just said 'Gee!' and mostly he was either laughing or said nothing. . . .

Two whistles!

No peace for us! Night-time! 'Main lower t'gallant!' In the darkness we had trouble with the down-hauls, compelling us to rig up special tackle; but the stars were shining brightly, we could discern the big seas and have time to jump into the rigging or on to the pin-rail round the mast. If we were none too pleased that this job must needs be done in the cold and darkness, at least we were delighted that we were spreading more canvas, extending one more wing to the breeze. We should reach the Horn all the more quickly.

I have stressed the truth that each trip in a sailing ship is a separate great adventure, a leap into the unknown, a drama distinct from any other. But all the while, additional to the big theme of winds and waves, there goes on that minor series of comedies and tragedies which have the fo'c'sle for their setting. In the *Olive-bank* it would have fascinated any student of human nature to watch the interplay of character upon character, each notable for consistency in their peculiarities.

For instance, enter Jim fresh from his look-out, grumbling terribly, and using expressions that would never reach print. He has been tolerated too long, gets on everybody's nerves, and is hated thoroughly. The time is approaching when this young upstart with the swollen head must be painfully made to realise he

is a mere junior. He creeps into his bunk exclaiming that 'Toothache's a cow.' We get used to that: so far he has complained of headache, heartache, stomach-ache, and all the other pains. What beats us is that this impossible apprentice ever came to sea. My own opinion is that the cadet's uniform really attracted him. The other night he asked me if it were easier to catch English girls with uniform, or not wearing uniform.

Conceit is the fundamental trouble in that lad. Invariably he would refer to himself as a *man*.

'Takes the guts out of a man,' he remarked, referring to going aloft. Of course we ragged him dreadfully about his 'manliness,' but it is wasted energy, since Jim has no sense of humour or sarcasm. *Alice in Wonderland* he once read and thought trash 'for a man.' 'Balancin' a eel on the end of yer nose—wat's the sense in that?'

It was useless to attempt answering, and he devoted himself to sucking his teeth so loudly that I could hardly hear the sound of winds and sea.

Next enter Frank. He is just down from the t'gallant mast.

'Lost me bloody cap! Tucked it in me belly, too. What'm I going to do about it? That's what I want t'know.'

We all love Frank. As Jim's popularity decreases, so Frank's becomes greater. Frank makes us all laugh, and any one who brings laughter into a scene of suppressed misery is deservedly welcomed. He was one of those natural and unconscious humorists with a curious lethargic way of talking. One of the sights was to watch Frank when he went along the deck trying to dodge the loose water. He was far too slow, always getting caught and tumbling head over heels into the

scuppers, simultaneously losing cap, sou'wester, food, or whatever else he chanced to be carrying.

As an interlude there would rise another moan from Jim.

'Me fingers're benumbed.'

Jim was cold all over, and began tightening up his clothes so much that buttons went flying all over the fo'c'sle.

But now enter Shaw on to the stage, furious and indignant. His opening speech can be given verbatim :

'That bloody fool Frank ! Damit all, I had my whole outfit drying in the galley—socks, shirt, trousers, and jersey. Frank goes to fetch them, and the bloody fool gets caught by a sea. My blasted pants gone over the side. *And* my socks. I've only got my sea-boots and oilskins to stand up in. Don't mind in the daytime, but it's at night. . . . Has any kind gentleman here got any articles of clothing for sale ?'

Then he would turn to me, whom for some unknown reason he always addressed as 'Olaf.' 'You, Olaf, what've you got in that great sea-chest of yours ?'

I dipped deep and extracted one spare jersey and one pair of socks. He accepted the former but declined the latter, fearing that he might spoil them.

These fellows were not merely great characters but of great courage, and always I kept having an opportunity of seeing them doing brave acts where many other men would falter. It was not that my shipmates came of a hardier race, but that they had been so continually familiarised with danger that it ceased to be startling. Even at the worst you would find them not stopping to indulge fear, but accepting peril and trouble with a quietness and grim humour that were magnificent to behold. One could not travel on a voyage

such as this without learning the meaning of courage and profiting by their example. A windjammer is a harsh and merciless taskmaster : it either makes or breaks a man, and it depends entirely on the individual which of these two results finally. There is no half-and-half.

As it was outside, where contrasts were severe in wind or weather, so it was within the fo'c'sle. There were no half-tones, nothing was indefinite, every item was clear-cut and bold. The simplest incidents became of momentous import, and a casual accident was raised to the height of supreme consequence : because we were shut off in a tiny world of our own, with our own standards and our own values. What might be happening in Europe, Asia, America, or Australia we knew not, neither did we care. Thrones might totter, dynasties come to an end, but just now these matters could not be communicated to our minds, and would have been subjected to an inferior position even had wireless kept us in touch with the globe's affairs.

That which really should arouse our interest was our immediate welfare, and little else. Thus, ridiculous as it may seem to those whose fingers are on the pulse of civilisation and know how to estimate accurately the day's news, it became a major tragedy for the fo'c'sle when I hit my head on the swinging lamp, smashed the glass, and transformed a dim dull light into darkness. Economy aboard these windjammers is pressed to its ultimate limit. A decent swinging lamp giving plenty of illumination whereby to eat, read, and dress, is not an unreasonable demand ; yet this never had been much of a thing and had been made by the Skipper in his spare time. Frank was the official lamp-trimmer, but he had never succeeded in extracting much light, and we had to make the best of a poor job.

Then the gramophone was plunged into misfortune, and this demanded our close attention. I have already remarked how it performed its part in keeping us cheery and preserving a relief to depressing pessimism. But now its health was precarious. One day this ancient instrument, during a heavy roll, when *Olivebank* was lurching unusually, slipped with a crash from table to floor, so that it was doubtful if music would ever be emitted again. We quite realised that its best days were long long ago, and for some time past it had to be wound several times during one record. Seldom, indeed, did it finish in the same key with which it started. Nevertheless, with all its deficiencies, that gramophone played not merely tunes but an important part in our lives. It was less a machine than a personal friend; rather a healer of wounded spirits than a box of tricks. We had become attached to the old thing, because when we were cold, miserable, down-hearted, we had only to turn on 'Happy Days' and up would go our temperature, we would forget to be Sad, but began to think that after all a windjammer was a very fine place in which to live.

So now it seemed doubtful if we should have music again, and the subject could be dismissed till we reached the Trades. Nor was that the only thing. We still possessed no skylight to our fo'c'sle, but had to manage with a tarpaulin which added dreariness to an already dark interior.

The difficulty was how to keep warm in my bunk, and so prevent waking up frequently. I piled on coats, mackintosh, and a large piece of sail-cloth¹ which

¹ I afterwards stretched this sail-cloth, prepared it, and painted thereon an oil picture of the *Olivebank* rounding the Horn. It was exhibited in the Royal Academy 1932, and is reproduced in this book.

acted as a quilt, but the fellows in the Starboard Watch just now seemed to be having the worst luck. They were ordered to stow the mizzen lower t'gallant sail, and the wind was blowing it out so that the canvas resembled the obstinacy of iron, with a result that they failed to get it furled before it began slatting at the yard with the noise of artillery. Finally, it was partially blown into shreds. Jim was up there and confessed afterwards that he was afraid; and to have had the heavy yard jumping like a demon against your stomach with the great sail blowing back out of the darkness into your face, is enough to terrify any lad.

Two more sails were taken in by the same Watch, and I was thankful that it hadn't been my turn. For something had gone wrong with me internally. At a later date, some months after arriving home, this culminated in an operation for appendicitis, which was the natural and logical sequel. But at first I attributed the pains to the badly baked bread produced by the *Olivebank's* Cook. I could hardly stand up straight when these violent attacks of indigestion seized me; my body was chilled so that I kept chattering like a madman, and my legs seemed to leave me. It was sheer luck that I was not summoned to climb rigging and lay out along a yard, and I only hoped the wind would hold so that there would be no need during my Watch on deck to set more sails. For the present I lay in my bunk feeling like death, with sea-boots and oilskins donned in readiness for 'Two Whistles,' and listened to the sea rushing across the deck.

I rose at midnight, staggered aft to the muster, staggered back to bed and took a drop of brandy, which gave me sleep and rest, so that on turning out at a quarter to four for the watch till 8 a.m. I felt a good deal better.

As the day dawned and the sun rose brilliantly beautiful over the great waves, I began to relish life as I had not enjoyed it for a long time. With a ready will I helped to man the capstan as we unfurled the mizzen upper topsail, and cared nothing for the sea tearing about one's legs. Lustily we tramped round and sang loudly as the sail spread out aloft making a gay pattern against the morning blue.

It turned out to be a wonderful day. There was a spanking breeze, with very heavy waves of green-blue mountains climbing up astern and threatening to swamp the ship. Some of those which fell on our decks were worse than any we had yet experienced. Occasionally hailstorms swept up from the south-west accompanied by heavy squalls of bitter wind. The clouds were narvellous; the effects of hail-showers falling down from the heavens, and the creamy afternoon light, were impressive to behold. Of course I was longing to paint these things, but was too busily employed to do more than make mental note of the wildness, the brilliant sunlight, the exquisite colouring, and the tonic-like influence of the air on one's mind.

We had left Melbourne just before midnight on January 16. It was now February 14, therefore we had been at sea just over four weeks. Our noon position was Lat. 51° S., Long. 102° W., so that gradually the South American coast was coming towards us. We bent a new lower t'gallant sail on the mizzen to take the place of the one that had been torn. The ship was rolling like hell, with the wind falling away. All sails were set, excepting the spanker, and I was doing my trick at the wheel feeling fit but dreadfully tired through want of sleep. It was a perfect occasion for photography, and the Captain sent me aloft with my

camera whilst he took over the wheel. This created no end of surprise and amusement among the crew, who imagined that I had asked a favour of the 'Old Man,' whereas the latter had volunteered the suggestion. Still more amused were they to learn that, after I came down and again received the wheel, the 'Old Man' was points off his course!

Considering the latitude that we were passing through, the *Olivebank* was certainly being favoured with glorious and unexpected weather. For a couple of days we had rather too little wind. It was my look-out from 1 till 2 a.m. The stars were brilliant, and Venus threw a path across the sea. But it was cold, and this made me remember the good things of life. What wouldn't I have given for a good steaming glass of hot milk with a spot of brandy in it? Or a nice comfortable chair before a glowing fire at which to spread one's hands? One doesn't realise how fortunate one is at home, how easy existence can be, until one has felt the bitter wind blowing up from the Antarctic and the storm-clouds shedding their wet. I, at least, till now never appreciated what a paradise home life could be. It would not be a bad experiment if all shore-dwellers, discontented with their lot, were sent to work a voyage in a windjammer. They would return with satisfaction at their normal environment.

Now the nearer we reached the Horn, the less were most of us inclined to consider the dark aspect of life. 'Just another week,' we kept reminding each other, 'and then . . .' But it is an historical fact that whilst that Cape gained its notoriety because of its westerlies, there are times when the wind off there blows from the east. Such a possibility now suggested itself to some of my companions, and the fearful thought seized us

all that, having reached at last the critical corner, we should strike a head-wind of storm force, be compelled to up helm, and fly back over part of our hard-won distance. It would not be the first time in the *Olivebank's* career that she had been unable to beat up to her port, and be made to turn back.

A thought too terrible to contemplate !

Somehow these intervening days were fraught with uneasiness, and personally I felt utterly depressed, though this was not unconnected with a relaxed throat and a feeling of being 'down.' I could raise my voice scarcely above the pitch for speaking. Perhaps the poor food of the last month, plus the cold and damp, may have accounted for the trouble directly, but it was the life aboard as a whole that was rather the cause. One could never get away from one's job: there was no relief such as a man finds when he quits his office and either goes home or plays a round of golf.

Persson and Plenard were the only two of all the ship's company possessing either culture or refinement, and the latter neither smoked nor drank. Astrom summed up the exact opposite attitude, but was typical of the 'hard case.' I confess to having become very tired of his sailor language, whilst the foolishness of Jim's remarks with their obvious and irritating platitudes put a considerable strain on one's self-control ; yet, for all that, it was an agreeable surprise one day to find Jim reading *Selected English Essays*.

Nor was that the only unexpected event.

I had recently formed the opinion that the Captain had placed me on his black-list, that he had little use for a seaman with a bad stomach, and that the 'Old Man' was displeased with my seamanship. Of course I may have imagined too much, though that was how

it struck me, and I could well believe that to him after thirty-five years' experience of seafaring my mistakes must have appeared pretty awful. But the climax came one afternoon when I tripped up very badly, yet over quite a small item.

My porthole was open, for the day chanced to be warm with little wind, and by no means the kind of weather we expected in this region. Seeing some water left in my painting dipper, I threw it out through the port. At the most there could not have been more than half an inch, but it was rusting the dipper. Unfortunately just outside was the foresail that we had taken down that morning, and it would be ready almost immediately to be sent below into the sail locker; for no sails can be put away until absolutely bone dry, or they will become damaged with the damp.

Less than two minutes after my action I was roused up from a dreamy reverie by the face of the 'Old Man' registering extreme anger. What he said in Swedish I failed to understand, but the others translated it and the meaning may be summed up very briefly in one sentence: 'Who the hell has been throwing water out of that port?' I explained that it was my fault, and that it was the first time I'd ever thrown anything through there, and certainly didn't notice the sail: but, notwithstanding my apologies, the Captain was by no means mollified. I had made a most unfortunate *faux pas*.

CHAPTER VIII

TOWARDS CAPE HORN

LAT. 54° S., Long. 88° W.

These look dull symbols to most readers, no doubt ; but to any one who has been round the Horn in a windjammer there is a wealth of significance. Plot the position on the page of any atlas, and the reason for being thrilled at once becomes manifest.

We had reached a spot which could be marked on the chart as almost within the Cape Horn approaches. That is to say, if we could not yet discern the 'corner,' at least it was becoming very real in our thoughts. At the same time this proximity brought with it new reason for anxiety. For the nearer we approached the extremity of South America, the more necessary was it to exert vigilance. Already certain signs suggested a strange sense of uncertainty and mystery. The sun had climbed to its zenith a dirty white smudge, and glimmered forlorn through a windless sky which dripped rain. This absence of a gale in such a neighbourhood was extraordinary, and instead of running under short canvas at ten knots we were idling along doing not more than two knots at the best.

Anything might have come out of that sky, and with no little anxiety we watched a swell beginning to come up from the south-east. The Mate saw it too, and remarked that it denoted either dirty weather that 'has been' or else some that was on its way from that quarter.

South-east ! Any kind of wind but that, please ! Any point of the compass whatsoever ! For this would mean a dead nose-ender to us. Let it blow as hard as it cared, but not from right ahead.

During the morning the breeze freshened, and it was from the north-west, yet the south-easterly swell was still working up and could not be ignored. What rotten luck if we were now to be treated treacherously !

Eighty-eight degrees west ?

Well, that meant about another 700 miles to Cape Horn, or no further than from the Orkneys to Land's End. Given a fair wind, we could almost do the distance in three days. It was now the eighteenth of February. What would be the date when these miles had been left astern ?

' My voord ! Send us de vind ! '

During the afternoon we braced up no less than four times, but happily it was the starboard braces, and before nightfall we were sailing ' by the wind ' with a north-easterly breeze. Of all the surprises ! We had expected westerlies or southerlies ; we had dreaded south-easterlies. But somehow a north-easter had never entered our heads. Anyway, it wasn't a head-wind, and we could proceed with it on the beam, setting all our sails but not making better than five or six knots. The weather had changed : it was cold and raw, the rain drove down in grey melancholy, and we were only too thankful that the south-easter had kept off. It is such incidents as this which distinctly contrast the old seafaring with the new : the uneasy mind of a wind-jammer's Captain as against the unruffled mentality of a steamer's. Can you wonder why so few of the sail-nurtured officers to-day despise modern propulsion ? I called to mind some of the remarks which had been

made aboard the *Tasmania*. The shellbacks had spoken wisdom.

All day a look-out was established on the fo'c'sle head. A cold, dreary duty, yet preferable to some other jobs aboard. At least you could keep moving about and maintaining your circulation. Moreover, with the yards braced hard on to the backstays (as they now were), the mainsail obscured the Skipper's vision from the poop, so that there was no need of too conscientious a vigil for icebergs. Small mercy, this relief? But our days and nights were mostly composed of incidents which landsmen would call petty, and we welcomed exceedingly any modification that would improve our routine.

Most of all—more than any other privilege—I appreciated my bunk. In the community life of a ship's fo'c'sle one of the most trying features in my case (as in the case doubtless of many another) consisted in having virtually no privacy—nowhere to withdraw and enjoy one's own thoughts, with the sole exception of the place for sleeping. To me this bunk connoted not merely an opportunity for resting, dozing, or even reading; it was the means for getting apart from a foreign outlook and conjuring up the beauties of an English landscape, its lanes, its hedgerows, and flowers. It enabled me to forget, and shut out for an hour, the vast, open waste of sea with never a single object to break the monotonous horizon.

It is possible to admire the best in the characters of fellow-beings without desiring to be cheek by jowl all the while during months. Astrom was the cleverest of the lot, but the untidiest, dirtiest, loudest, and coarsest. Wine, women, and eating probably occupied the chief part of his life when ashore, and of his thoughts when at sea. Greed was certainly a dominant trait.

Once we had something really appetising for tea : it consisted of potatoes done up in balls and fried, with jam on them.

Along came Astrom from his own fo'c'sle to ours shouting in Swedish emphatically, and gesticulating wildly, that he was still very hungry. Looking round gluttonously, he could find no potato but only some cold mince that somebody had left on his plate.

'Who's is dis?' he asked. 'And dis?' he pointed to a second. 'And dis, too? I vill have dis.'

Spitting on his hands, he sat down and began shovelling food down his throat with a rare energy. There was no little animality and brutish simplicity in this Swede.

Astrom was a strange character. He need never have come to sea, for his people had plenty of money and given him a good education. He could speak fluently English, French, German, Swedish, and Finnish, besides a little Russian and a smattering of Spanish. But I always believed he was one of those men who follow the line of least resistance, and would never stick at any avocation with sufficient earnestness to achieve success. In my opinion he should have been an actor, for he had the ability to tell a story in a racy, dramatic, and interesting manner, though for most of the time he was speaking in Swedish, and much of it must have been lost on me.

But the more I saw of Frank, the more I discovered in him that which was pleasing and companionable : I could bestow on him admiration which would have been impossible, unconditionally, with regard to Astrom. Frank seldom worked with our party as he was the lamp-trimmer, and somehow managed to spend most of his day attending to the ship's lighting arrangements, which (incidentally) were of the crudest and most

primitive. I was interested to find that Frank could not abide Jim : that the latter aggravated Frank in much the same degree with which I felt annoyed.

Now Jim had a curious habit of appropriating everybody's dry clothes, without taking the preliminary trouble to ask permission.

' Jim, you've pinched my overcoat.'

' Sure I have. And I want it.'

' But why ?'

' To keep me warm in my bunk, of course.'

' Well, you've jolly well got to give it up.'

Then, with many grumbles and every reluctance, he would take the coat off and inform me it was also my sou'wester he happened to be wearing. I allowed him to carry on with this for the present.

' But, for Heaven's sake, don't lose it.'

Already he had lost two of his own and one belonging to some one else. The lad was no stickler as to property. Not content with the above,

' And ken I 'ave your gloves ?' he now requested.

It was difficult to answer such a question without thinking the matter over. Some people one would present with all that one possessed : there are others on whom one could bestow not even the smallest gift except unwillingly. To that class belonged Jim, and I was finding it scarcely possible to treat him with civility. The fo'c'sle of a ship is a very limited space, where it is advisable to be blind in regard to others' shortcomings. The life is a great test and trial of self-discipline. Think as much as you like, but it is better to keep your personal opinions to yourself if you value peace and quietness for the rest of the voyage.

But young Jim was beyond all human toleration. He would accept a hint from none of us, and there was

nothing that he could be told ; he pretended to know everything, for had he not come 'strite from one of them 'igh schools' ? Inform him that he was a very clever youngster, and he believed you. Bumptious, sulky, foolish, and entirely lacking any sense of proportion ; selfish, gluttonous, and (that unpardonable characteristic afloat) without charity ; he was so conceited that he could give orders to the Captain unconcernedly.

Outside the wind maintained its direction, accompanied by a good deal of rain and thickness. Before dark we took in t'gallants and mainsail as the breeze freshened. Our progress was certainly not rapid, for we made good not more than 60 to 100 miles a day. Steering by the wind was a simple business, so that during a whole hour I found it necessary to turn the wheel not more than one spoke ; but there was a great temptation to bring her up closer to the wind. Vessels like the *Olivebank* are unable to do much good with the wind for'ard of the beam, and it is useless to try sailing them as one would a smart fore-and-after. At times the steersman almost deceives himself into believing that the wind during his watch is beginning to become more free, and blowing from abaft the beam. There is a certain amount of pride and honour in having been able to bring the breeze to waft from the right direction, and some skippers present a drink to the man-at-the-wheel who is lucky enough to accomplish this.

The Second Mate told me about a man aboard a small schooner to whom the Skipper promised such refreshment if only he could make the achievement. Now that meant a change as much as four points. The helmsman happened to be young, who had only recently learned how to steer. 'All right,' said he, and over

spun the wheel till the ship was sailing more freely. Thus the schooner got her fair wind without question, but the inexperienced mariner did not receive his drink. He was found to be steering four points off his course !

But aboard the *Olivebank* the unexpected did actually happen, and the breeze now came from aft. We awoke to find the north-easter had changed into a soft westerly, so that our yards were already squared to catch the following wind ; moreover it was a welcome surprise when we discovered that the grey mists had departed, and the sun was shining. Still greater was our gladness as this day wore on, and there seemed a distinct promise that the wind would strengthen. Surely we should soon be at Cape Horn now, since our noon position was Lat. 57° S., Long. 80° W.

Unfortunately the westerly became tired and died away, to leave us idle and rolling gently to the swell. If we had been astounded by the north-easter, we were amazed that we should lie becalmed under a brilliant sky, in hot sunshine, with a calm sea, yet only about 300 miles off the dreaded Cape Horn. It was not easy to interpret this exceptional weather. At sunset there were indications of another gale approaching, which seemed natural enough, but the sails just filled and then flapped listless against the masts, so that when we went on deck at four the next morning not a suspicion of a breeze was noticeable. Seated at breakfast, I could note through the open door a band of delicate blue along the horizon, with fine-weather indications everywhere in the sky above. It was most unnatural that such things could be hereabouts.

I lay in my bunk dreaming and reading, but occasionally gazing out through the port at the blue waters that were gradually changing to the appearance of glass.

The sunlight became irresistible and drove me outside on to the fo'c'sle head, where I sat on the rail, but after dinner dragged up there my mattress which I stretched over the anchor. It was a wonderful joy to lie there, gazing aloft into the white sails that filled every time the ship lay over to the swell accompanied by the curious sound as the chain sheets drew up through the blocks.

There is something unique in a sailing ship becalmed : perhaps there is nothing which so completely conveys the sensation of inactivity and restfulness. All this was as incredible as it was delightfully contrasted after those weeks of surging waters and raw cold winds. The peace and quiet are welcomed with both hands as the rarest of gifts, especially if the time chances to be a Saturday afternoon, or a Sunday when the crew are free. Obviously, should the wind change there must be the duty at the braces or of taking in sail, so the Watch ever remained ready. And, too, there must be added the one-man job at the wheel. Otherwise this Saturday could be regarded as a Heaven-sent interlude, restful and refreshing, and I for one felt a sense of thankfulness.

Even the spell of steering consisted of the least activity. However much you turned the wheel till helm was hard over, it made no difference, since the ship possessed not even steerage way. During this idle hour you had, however, time to gaze at the blue waters, take in a mental impression of golden sunlight and leisurely sounds. Now and again sea-birds called and departed. The albatross of these regions, accustomed to wild weather and unable to make anything of this calm, gave up his wonted gliding and gracefully brought his great white body to float asleep on the water. About the decks were the voices of *Olivebank's*

crew as they filled in the time washing clothes, laughing, yarning, singing, whilst some of the more wise brought out their clothing and bedding to get an airing.

When I had laid my own mattress in the sunshine I was to receive a great astonishment on discovering that the underside was all wet, mildewy, and smelly. Perhaps it was well during these past weeks, since leaving Melbourne, that whilst I had been inviting rheumatic fever I had remained in ignorance ; and there was a certain consolation in now observing that everybody else's mattress appeared equally damp. Dear me ! When at last we did reach those much-discussed Trades, what a universal airing and washing would be attempted !

But our days of windless existence could not pass without excitement of some sort. One night a spot of trouble occurred which well shows how deeply affected was our little community by the most petty events. Looking back on that period of one's life, it seems quite absurd that grown-up men could be influenced seriously by incidents barely deserving of notice. It is but fair, however, to recollect that five weeks and more of incessant sea motion, with indifferent food as well as a host of minor annoyances, had a cumulative effect in respect of explosive tempers. Men herded together on land within the boundary of prison walls do not improve as to their spirits, nor take on a humorous view of life. We aboard the *Olivebank*, who had signed on for the long voyage, had indeed forfeited our freedom and sold ourselves into so many months' imprisonment. That was what it really amounted to. On the whole our lot could be regarded as rather worse, since a shore prisoner gets every night in his bed, never is called out to go aloft during darkness and a gale of

wind, nor gets wet up to his waist whilst proceeding to his work.

Is it to be marvelled that all of a sudden the seafarer's patience snaps, something inside him flares up, and within only a few seconds the atmosphere becomes alight also?

The man through whom the bother commenced on this present occasion happened to be the Steward, and the affair had its origin in this wise. Strictly speaking, the galley always belongs exclusively to the Cook, and none of us were really allowed to remain therein. Nevertheless, it had become a recognised practice, whenever we had the opportunity, for some of us to sit in front of that welcome fire, especially after sunset. The Cook, whilst not actually protesting, had never approved of these visitations to his territory. At the best of times he was of an unsociable type, yet quite obliging to most of us, and to Koskinnen especially. In the latter case this attitude came not unforced: the Cook regarded Koskinnen with fear.

The most impartial critic would certainly insist that there was a good deal to be said on behalf of the Cook's attitude, who could not go about his job properly if we invaded the warm galley and got in his way. Now the Cook's great ally was the Steward, and this pair by a strict allegiance sought together with firm endeavour to keep out all intruders. So ingenious were their methods that one may be mentioned forthwith. In order to 'gas' their unwelcome visitors and cause their withdrawal, the favourite trick was employed of throwing pepper and vinegar on to the fire. Now on the night which I am recalling it happened that Persson was seated quietly in the galley, doing no harm to any one, when there entered the Steward. The latter at once

decided to have Persson out and to waste no time about it.

The simplest and normal method would have been best : to have requested the visitor to go elsewhere. And Persson might have left. The Steward chose a more savage mode. He took vinegar and dashed it on to the fire, but immediately thereafter, with his back to the door, seized Persson by the throat, threw boiling water over him, scalding legs and body. Such action, of course, quickly brought about a crisis. Persson was wild with anger, hit forth fiercely, found himself outside on deck, and challenged the Steward to come and fight it out. The invitation was declined, but the affair could not end indefinitely. Persson's anger had risen to fever-pitch, the shouts of these two men at bay were echoed round the deck and had attracted the attention of us all.

The 'Old Man' was looking on ; most of the crew were standing around cheering Persson and beseeching him to give the Steward what he deserved hot and strong. For a brief interval nothing happened, and finally the Steward, seizing an opportunity, rushed aft with the food, besides a pot of boiling water which he threatened to throw over his enemy. Persson chased after his assailant, but the latter reached the poop first, which he ascended in accordance with his duties though with also unprecedented speed. Now it is a law of the sea that no sailor must ascend this sacrosanct portion of the ship except in fulfilment of orders, and Persson's fury did not prevent him from remembering that rule.

He waited, nevertheless, for the Steward's return. It did not demand too much patience, for soon came he carrying his covered basket in which the food was always borne from the galley. Persson set about the foe with

determination, but suddenly found himself confronted with a great bread-knife which the Steward had concealed under the basket cover. Now at this crisis fate so contrived that Koskinnen should be coming for'ard from the wheel and caught sight of the ugly situation that had developed. Indignation fired him, and without further ado this great fellow broke into the fight, knocked the Steward this way and that, dominated him, felled him into the scuppers. The Steward picked himself up and fled aft, but pursued by the hefty Koskinnen, who caught him at a certain portion of the anatomy with all the force that a heavy sea-boot can be driven. It was a mighty blow, extremely effective, and quite in time, for the Steward now fled up the poop ladder.

Koskinnen had certainly arrived on the scene at the right time and stopped a possible tragedy: he had likewise struck terror into the Steward, who now burst into tears and cried like an infant. Whimpering with his troubles, he sought out the 'Old Man' and refuge. The Captain handled the situation with tact, and subdued the excitement. He sent for Koskinnen and Persson to inquire what it was all about, and they obeyed the summons. Nothing further happened, and the incident passed into history. Persson did indeed complain that the Steward was ten years the senior, was bigger, and had no right to have been afraid. My own opinion considered that Persson, though less tall, was the stronger of the two and fifty times more of a man. I believed, also, the Steward to be half-witted and not worth fighting.

However, this brief spasm had broken up the monotony of a peaceful evening, given us all something to talk about, and made us forget our individual reasons for growling: yet dominating these minor items was

the annoyance of having to endure delay through headwinds and calm. Here was Thursday, the twenty-sixth of February, and since Saturday we had sailed not more than about 200 miles ! Terrible prolongation of a voyage ! If we looked forward to another warm, peaceful Sunday such as the last, the vision was soon dispelled. Even by sundown our suspicions commenced, for behind that disc was a film of windy cloud over which came other clouds soft and buff, sure harbingers of storm. As the darkness deepened, so the breeze freshened, and in place of a much-desired south-wester we now received an easterly again.

What a life ! Who would go to sea in sail ?

We braced the yards, set jibs and staysails, and began wearily beating up to the nor'ard. It was depressing to all our aspirations and longings. We had by this time got so far south as Lat. 56° , and so near to Cape Horn's position as to be in Long. 70° , yet here we had been cheated of that weather for which this part of the globe has been made famous in the history books throughout all ages. But what happened to the *Olivebank* doubtless occurred in previous centuries to other sailing ships. Some of us have often wondered how those unhandy and unweatherly vessels of, say, the seventeenth century ever got round the Horn from east to west ; and how they could beat against a westerly. Perhaps the answer is that whilst in some cases victory was won only by pertinacity and endurance of weeks, yet in other cases they were favoured by a lucky slant of easterly winds.

How we cursed our bad luck just now ! Instead of leisure, it was hard work for us. Whereas any man might have made a confident guess that we should be running round the Horn with yards squared and sails

needing little attention except to be taken in, we now were kept busy, tediously and laboriously tacking ship : and this once more reminded us that we were very short-handed for efficiency. She never missed stays and always came round on the other course, but as we glanced eastwards before going below, and noted the inky clouds collecting over the lurid red sunrise, we were not made any the happier.

‘Red sky at morning, a sailor’s warning !’

Sunday—our free day—arrived, and still we were beating up to the north instead of running before the wind and making eastward. Then round we would come, and find the ship heading to the southward. How we hated having to stand by and ‘bout ship’ so frequently ! How hopeless that sensation in the pit of one’s stomach when realising that in spite of all this sailing about, we were in truth making little headway ! The fact was that actually we were making so much leeway, so when next time we took sights we should find ourselves back near our previous noon position. For you cannot sail these square-riggers to windward with the closeness and satisfaction that can be obtained in a modern racing cutter. The former are intended to make use of fair winds to the fullest limit, and this is their virtue as well as their inability. They are at their very worst when trying to go against the wind ; their efforts are both pathetic and ludicrous to contemplate.

Why couldn’t we have had this same amount of wind blowing from aft ? And how it could rain down there ! For days together it poured, driving with such untiring earnestness that ashore all land would have become impassable for floods. We were cold and miserable, but were doing our best to keep our hearts alive under

the depressing conditions. It might have been much worse had the head-wind blown harder and set us further to leeward ; and whilst a certain amount of water lopped aboard, this amounted to no great quantity. We had settled down to bear whatever had to be endured, and had become more like insensitive machines than human beings capable of feeling.

And then at length arrived Monday morning. The wind changed early that day, we were able to square away and hold on a course NE $\frac{1}{2}$ E., which indicated that we were now heading up for the Horn ; thus, as we bowled along so were revived our powers of perception, and so rose our spirits. Men are curiously easy to influence, and sailors possess a character that is almost childlike in simplicity. If they are largely subject to mass-thinking, they are likewise quick to respond. Subtlety, as a landsman knows the word in towns and cities, does not pertain to the seafarer's make-up. The latter is too concerned with plain truths, severe contrasts, and bold issues, to imagine any niceties. He likes colouring to be distinctive and plenteously laid on, for his mind appreciates superlatives.

The graph of a fo'c'sle community's state of mind in regard to contentment at any hour would show a curious lack of consistency : we should find great depressions followed by heights of happiness, in much the same manner as changeability from calm to gale was recorded by a barometer. Thus it was that when once it became known we were now steering a course again, not boxing about trying ineffectually to defeat an unfriendly wind, the general happiness of the crew shot up 75 per cent. immediately. Just so quickly were past annoyances forgotten.

Nevertheless we had barely accustomed ourselves to

the good fortune than the wind once more died away, so that we spent twenty-four dreary hours during which we made not more than five miles through the water. Down fell our mental barometer when the sights were worked out, and it was ascertained that we had drifted one whole degree west, and now were about 200 miles too far south. Such experiences and changes taught us the true meaning of the word disappointment, and I can well understand something of the argument which is employed on behalf of the windjammer as a wonderful school for character. A man learns here, with pain yet without being able to forget, certain elementary virtues that he would not readily acquire otherwise.

And now came a genuine Cape Horn swell. I had often heard of this local feature which would generally accompany a calm, but all that had ever been told me understated the truth. This particular motion happened to be coming up from the west, and owned some of the power normally belonging to an earthquake. Now when a ship has way and progresses through the water, she is conscious of swell only partially, because she can afford to ignore it. But when she is robbed of propulsive ability and cannot escape, she is at the mercy of every undulation. In the darkness of a windless night and a Cape Horn swell, believe me, there exists a condition nearly as terrifying as any fear can create.

Firstly, there is the sense of utter helplessness and despondency ; but dominating all is the pandemonium of creaking blocks, straining cordage, slatting sails, whilst the hull itself complains groaningly from every rivet and joint. Everything in the fo'c'sle not securely lashed down begins immediately to move about. Buckets, cans, sea-chests, brooms, shoes, mugs, chairs, clothing, go sliding and clattering about as ship lays

over on her beam-ends. It is quite impossible to imagine the din and its effect on raw nerves, or to conjure up the continuous discomfort of trying to retain one's balance amid the violent rolling. Sleep I could not. Although I jammed knees and back against either side of the bunk, nothing could stop that infernal shifting of the body in obedience to the *Olivebank's* outrageous movements.

There was no respite, no mercy. I laid my head on the pillow but felt as if my face were being dragged clean off by force. Even when I snatched a few minutes' dozing, they were not rest-giving but nightmarish, and there continued a semi-conscious realisation that the ship was revolving all the time.

Then, once again, occurred a mighty change, and the wind not merely returned to the sea but from aft, so that whilst we still rolled alarmingly and pitched abominably in the exceptional swell, at least we were holding our course and making towards the invisible Horn. It would be hardly possible to describe those waves, but the valleys between the mighty rollers were vast enough for concealment of whole towns. The decks were always being filled by heavy seas, till we became wearied with the toil of fighting through the waters about our legs and endeavouring to preserve our balance. In order to ease the rolling as much as practicable, our Skipper kept her under snug canvas, with only lower topsails and foresail set.

In spite of fatigue and dampness, each of us therefore was buoyed up with the thought that we were running down the last of our easting and would surely be round Cape Horn by Wednesday night, since it was now Monday. But would you believe it? On Wednesday the wind once more died dead, rose to life during the

night, but from the eastward ! It was a wicked, wanton trick to play on tired sailormen. We braced yards, tacked north and south, and then to our surprise as we were changing the watch at 8 p.m. the breeze changed and was blowing from the westward. Fair wind ! Willingly we went to braces ; gladly we set staysails and jibs ; hopefully we steered to the east where at some distance less than a hundred miles the grim old Cape, that enemy of all mariners, was waiting to disclose itself. So many days had passed since any of us had seen land that, now the days had grown into about six weeks, a keen excitement buzzed through the ship. It would be good to observe a bit of land, to know that the long voyage across the Pacific had passed, and that the Atlantic was about to be entered.

We were at work chipping and painting with red lead, it was ever a job that not one of us liked, and I in particular hated it thoroughly. Nevertheless, suddenly we were all joking and laughing for good nature and a new contentment. Cape Horn could not be far distant now : we were wiping out the few remaining miles that separated us.

And then the Mate gave us great joy by his definite pronouncement.

‘ We shall see her to-night,’ he foretold.

He spoke as if referring to some old hag, a witch who exercised her dark magic over ships and men ; nevertheless it was the finest bit of news we had heard since leaving Melbourne.

‘ We shall see her to-night,’ we kept repeating.

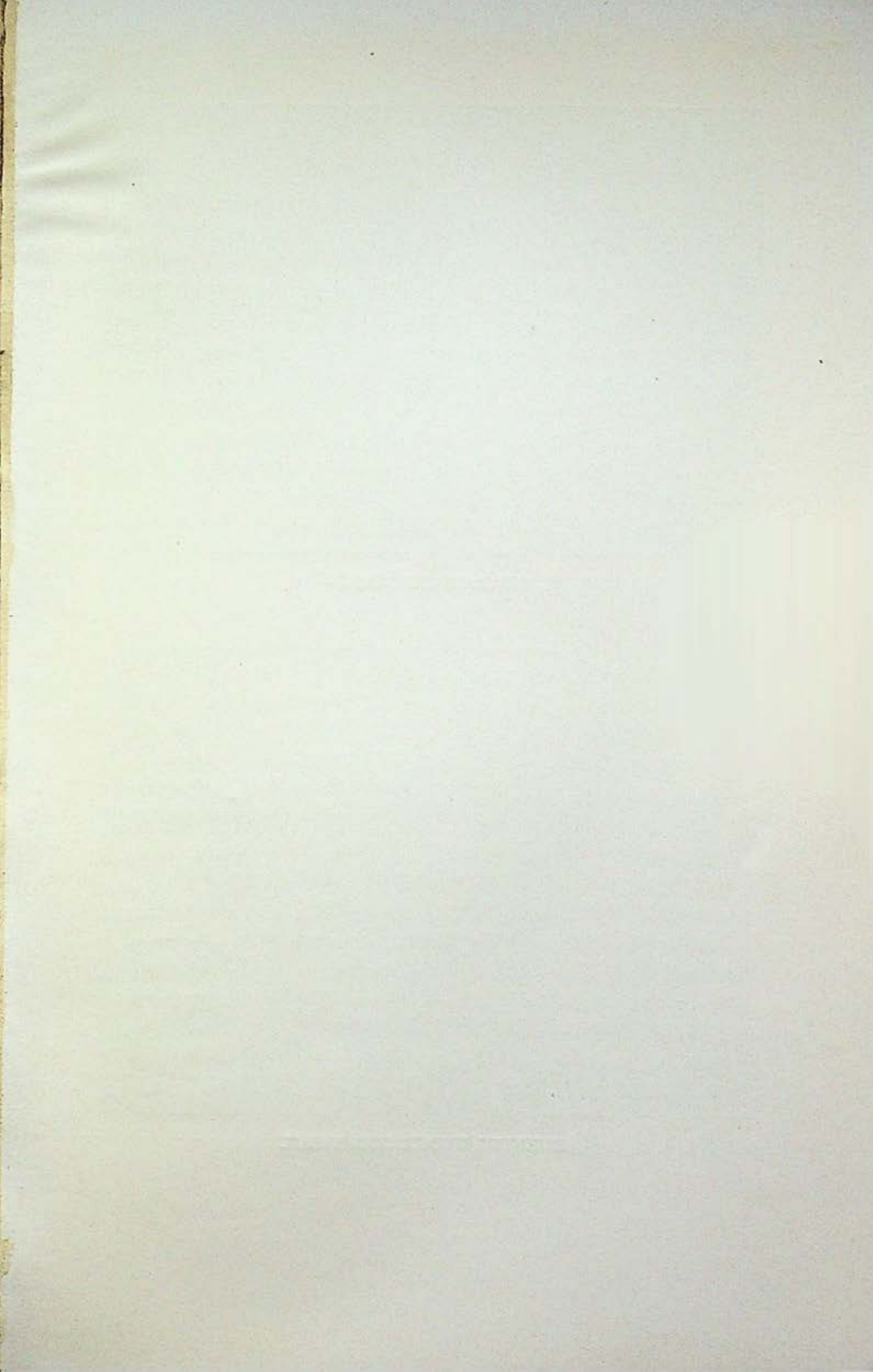
CHAPTER IX

INTO THE ATLANTIC

BUT the Mate had spoken too soon : the wind must have heard him and tricked us for flaunting such hopes. It sent us a calm almost immediately, so that the Cape seemed as far off as ever, and we just rolled about helpless on the swell. All day we spent in this comfortless fashion, whilst the storm-clouds maintained their shape and colour, lazily showering down on our decks both snow and hail : yet no wind stirred, and the still silence was impressively strange.

At night, however, a slight breeze came up from the westward enabling us to square away and steer hopefully in an easterly direction with a result that early on the morning of Saturday, February 28, something dramatically interesting did happen. It so happened—and I shall always be thankful—that it was my trick at the wheel from 4 a.m. to 5 a.m. Almost as soon as I took over, the Skipper discovered land on the port bow. They were islands, the Diego Ramirez group, just rocks similar to thousands of others, but for us they had a special significance. We had been forty-three days under way, and this was the first bit of anything other than sea that we had sighted for a month.

One's feelings were registering a sense of elation, for this was one of the big moments in a lifetime. Here was the fringe of South America's continent, a most inhospitable shore though to us it seemed most welcome,



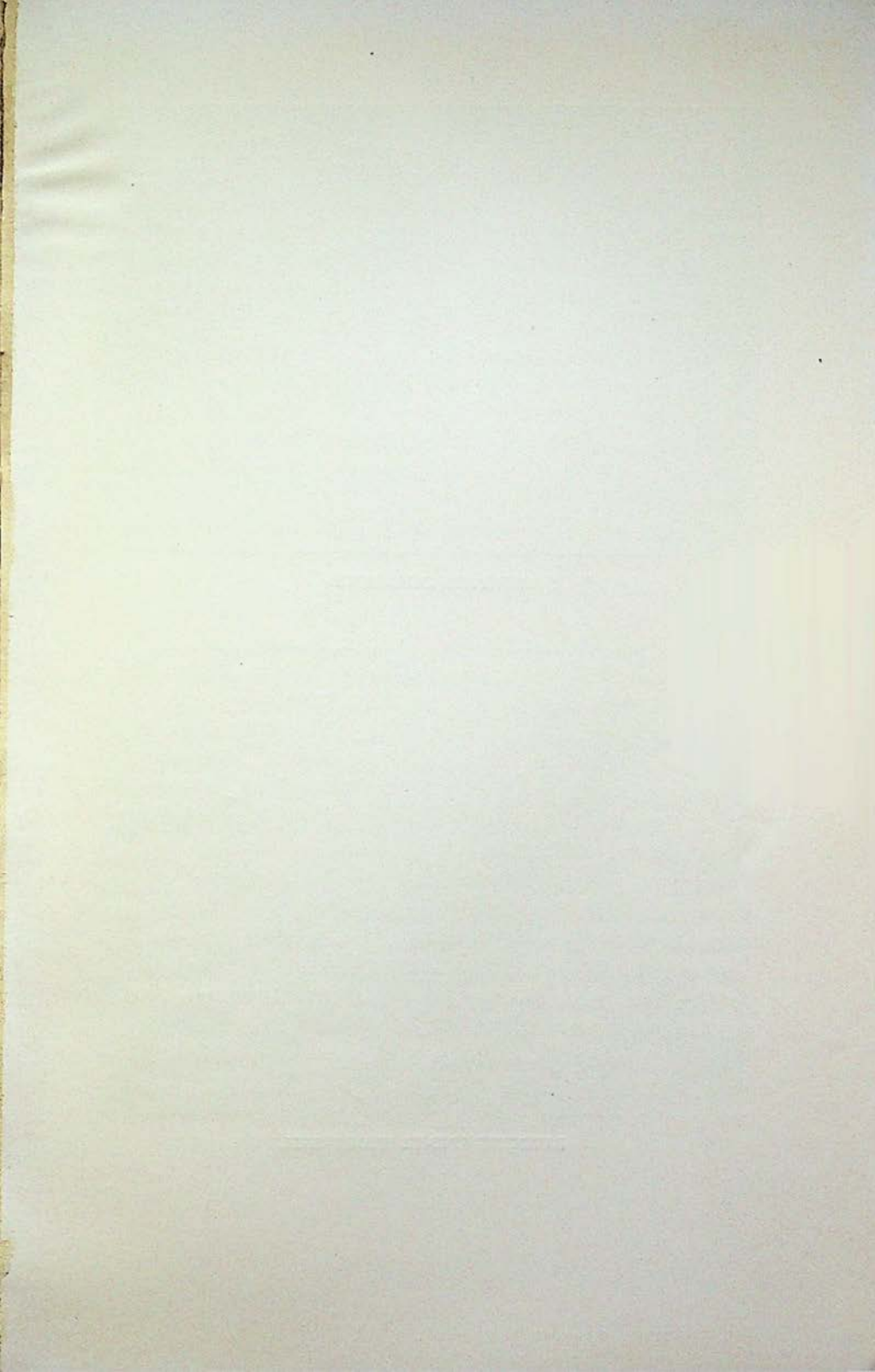
CHAPTER IX

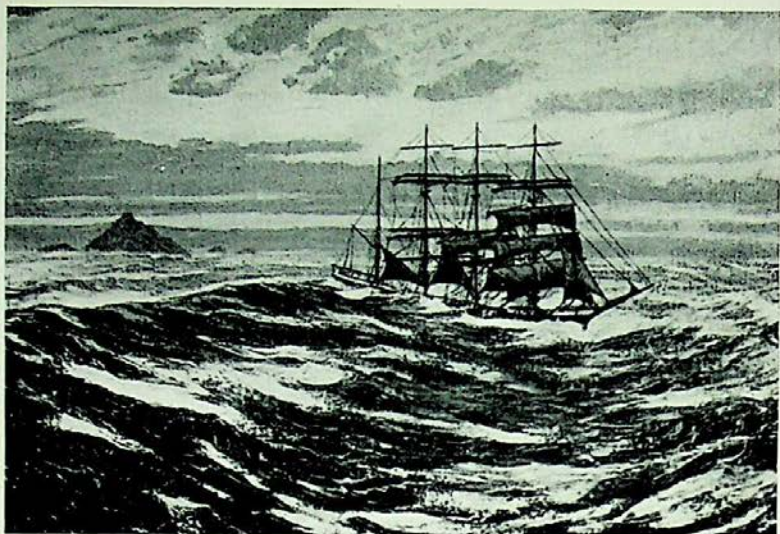
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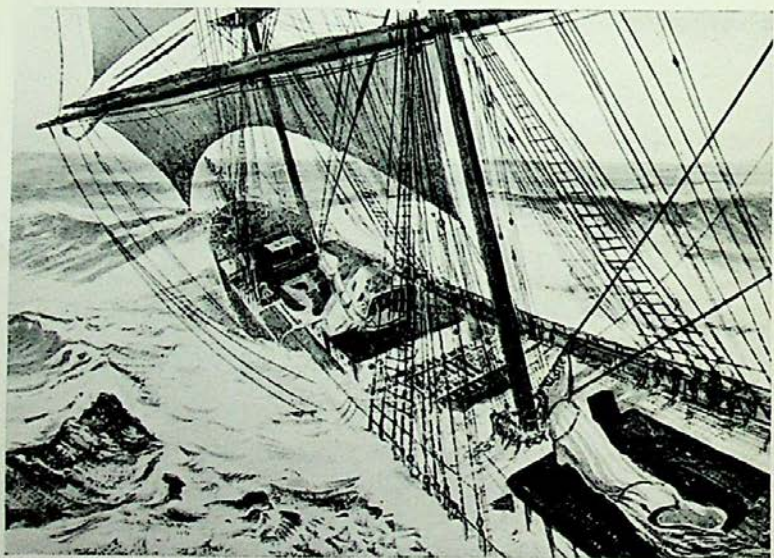
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WE PASS CAPE HORN



RUNNING UNDER SHORT SAIL.

and Cape Horn itself was only some sixty miles ahead. What a magnificent morning! The sun rose in a glorious array of gold, orange, and blue, with fine formations of cumulus. And what wonderful sailing! The wind was blowing freshly but offshore, and we were hurrying along with everything set, doing our limit of about ten knots. All hands were in the best of spirits when we sat down to coffee at 5.30 a.m. In spite of it being my period off watch, I could not remain long below. The call of beauty in sky and sea racing by summoned me on deck to note the grand effect.

Great showers sped across, and at one time there existed a glorious rainbow which had the appearance of terminating actually at the *Olivebank's* deck. We were shoving along in magnificent style that could scarcely be comprehended after our days of head-winds and calm. It was one enormous thrill thus to be rushing 'round the corner' from this ocean to the other, through the most notoriously stormy zone that ships still traverse. There was a wild spirit of the morning that sent one's blood tingling, a sense of savage ecstasy plucked from the air, and made one feel that this must surely be such a rare day that sailors are glad to be sailors rather than mere seamen. No question as to the speed, for about noon the *Olivebank* had brought us abreast of Cape Horn. When our Watch went on deck at one o'clock the sunshine had vanished, but we snatched just a fleeting glance of the rock some five miles distant, and then the slatey sky opened to deluge us with rain, shutting out any further view whatsoever.

But we had seen the infamous Cape 'Stiff,' and to only a few is that privilege ever granted. How many mariners still serving afloat to-day have had such a chance? Now that the Panama Canal has withdrawn

most of the steamers that used to pass, and less than a dozen sailing ships blow round in a year, it is a thoroughly exceptional occurrence that human eyes should gaze on the grizzly Horn. This loneliest outpost of the world, desolate, bitter, and rising from a waste of waters, does not tempt men to come again : for me once is enough, but I am proud to think I belong to that select body of survivors who have been round it in a sailing ship, and before the mast. How many of them ? Well, you could put the whole lot into a small room without crowding, and each year their numbers grow less.

Really it was most difficult to convince oneself that we *were* round. The future might have in store for us whatever it liked, and all sorts of things might happen, but we were now heading for Home—however far away that should be. Thousands of miles ? Well, yes. If we had now just accomplished about 6000 miles in six weeks, there still remained more than 8000 miles to be wiped off ere we reached the British Isles, so weeks and weeks must first be endured ere we could gain our freedom again.

It is worth noting that, notwithstanding Cape Horn's evil traditions, there was not the heavy weather off this extremity that we had been certain would meet us : the bad gale, already related, had occurred surprisingly early. Thus the psychological effect on us all at having been let off rather lightly could not be disguised. And there was yet another cause of contentment. In crossing the Pacific each degree of longitude brought us so much more to the eastward : but now, in steering north, each degree of latitude would bring us ever so much more definitely homeward.

Forty-three days ! We had certainly broken no

record, though at one time it had seemed as if we might have put up a pretty good passage, but for the calms and head-winds. On the other hand, some sailing ships have spent a longer time than this between Melbourne and the Horn, so we need not feel too ashamed. That last fortnight, and especially the last week, I have not yet erased from memory : it was too strenuous to be dismissed easily. As all the world knows, life aboard a windjammer is no mere pleasure cruise, but for the reason that I was feeling far from fit my outlook had been framed in hopeless depression. To toil aloft, haul on ropes, turn out of one's bunk in the wet dark hours of early morning ; stand a look-out in driving rain or bitter wind without protection ; to labour at a kicking wheel ; and throughout these periods to be cold and wretched, with a stomach out of control and wearying one with perpetual pain ; these could be borne only by an effort of the will. They also caused one to look back with appreciation at those comforts of home, those luxuries and delicacies of food, that undervalued opportunity for leisure. Such possibilities seemed nowadays utterly out of reach, no matter whether your thoughts were retrospective or looking long ahead.

The food showed no improvement, and now Persson had developed another vile boil on his elbow, causing the whole arm to swell. I dressed it for him as best I could, and had the unpleasant duty of pinching out the foul matter. It was pleasing to be of service to a shipmate ; only I again wished my supply of bandages, cotton-wool, and lint had been more plentiful. If we were to spend another twelve weeks in the *Olivebank*, this stock would have run out. Still . . . why meet trouble by looking so far ahead ?

I mentioned just now that we passed the Horn at

five miles' distance. Up to the end of any normal February the winds hereabouts should always be westerly, and Skippers like to keep in so close that they can sight the Cape followed by Staten Island, rather than laying a course more to the southward. It blew hard during that afternoon, so that we took in both lower t'gallants and mainsail. The 'Old Man' came fidgiting around whilst we were sweating away at sheets and buntlines. Whenever his eager eyes were observing my fumbling seamanship, I never seemed to do the right thing; and when he told me to 'Let go the mainsail sheet!' I heard distinctly enough except for the last two words.

What with the noise of the wind, together with his broken accent, it was most difficult to get that command clear and unequivocal as every order should be.

'Leggo!' he shouted. 'Leggo!'

(But let go *what*?)

'Leggo!' He stamped and jumped about, clapping his hands at my inactivity.

('All right, you ruddy old fool,' the words almost quitted my lips, 'I will let go. Only, what the hell d'you wish me to let go?')

The incident, small in itself, acting on a too sensitive nature, depressed me more than was reasonable. I hated being shouted at, despaired of ever becoming a genuine sailor, felt conscious of an inferiority complex, and realised that I was just fifteen years too late for learning. This seafaring life demanded much that had never been evoked ashore, and now I recognised that truth. I was still a reticent, hesitant landlubber, whereas I ought to have shown more initiative—jumped to the job—dived into the midst of it without waiting. Until coming aboard the *Olivebank* I had never needed

to use my fingers as a craftsman, and even now could it be said that I had succeeded in readapting myself?

How very different from each other can be the various occupations of a man's existence! A life devoted to study, thought, the delicate handling of paint-brush and pencil, hardly fits a fellow for the rough-and-tumble of windjammer work. Nevertheless, I had during these weeks learnt much, unlearnt more, and not failed to perceive that in the seafaring art there is something beautiful and orderly. Always to me it was a source of wonder that the roughest sailor does his work with such thoroughness and neatness. There is a special nautical way of performing every shipboard job, no matter how elementary the latter may be. The whole thing boils down to a question of being trained up to the sea from boyhood. For example, I certainly did imagine I knew how to use a broom, and began to handle it in the normal manner. Was this correct? Not a bit of it! Sailors have a custom of using the back of a broom. To me it appeared a mere pose at first, until I found how effective this manner really was and that there could be no better way of getting a deck free from water.

Poor Starboard Watch! I've mentioned it before, and must emphasise it again, that it always seemed as if the duty fell on us when sail had to be set or taken in. How we would come down from aloft cursing the 'Old Man' for being 'afraid of his pocket handkerchiefs.' 'Gee!' Persson would exclaim. 'He can't sail better than a bloody old woman. The First Mate: he never takes in sail like the Skeeper. Forbunden!'

Now the last word is the Swedish equivalent for the British 'Damn.' Every time that we were sent up to the yards for sail-stowing, and returned to deck just as

the wind dropped, this Swedish expression was in keen demand. This afternoon, having been becalmed for several hours, with only desultory puffs from varying quarters, it was the Port Watch's turn (for once) to keep busily trimming braces and staysails. And this was a Saturday, too. I had left my bunk, being off duty, and was taking half an hour's exercise along deck before tea-time. It had now begun to blow, we were cracking along at a good ten knots, and I noticed a great cloud coming out of the west with hail falling across the evening light beneath it. An angry, venomous cloud! And next followed the lightning with its thunder.

That was a genuine Cape Horn cloud: it was, however, passing away to the southward, whilst in the north the sky looked clear and bright. The wind showed signs of increasing, and just as we sat down to tea it blew such a violent squall from out of the west that within a few minutes the sea was a smother of foam. Aloft, pandemonium now seized sails, whilst from the deck arose the voice of First Mate yelling his orders to the Port Watch who were hauling furiously at the t'gallant buntlines. The foresheet had suddenly slacked up, thus allowing the foresail to shoot forth and bang itself about with the sound of big guns.

Above, the t'gallants were likewise behaving in an unrestrained manner, so that within a few minutes they had blown themselves to glory! New sails would be needed both on fore and mizzen, and meanwhile the remnants were slatting themselves to further shreds. In mad haste the Port Watch climbed the rigging to secure what was left, and a thoroughly nasty task that must have been. No: we didn't envy our opposite numbers just now. Wonderfully fortunate we had

been on this occasion, and appreciated the fact that it had happened just before Six Bells. So we could indulge ourselves with a good laugh in the fo'c'sle and go on with our meal.

There is no pretence at charity, no wasting of sympathy, between one Watch and the other. We ourselves had tasted a full share of troubles, so that we made no attempt to conceal the joy we felt when heavy work fell on the Port Watch. Nor did we refrain from open criticism. What about the First Mate and his idea of carrying sail, when he let it blow away? How would the 'Old Man' like that to happen?

But the squall departed nearly as quickly as it had arrived. After ten minutes the treacherous wind dropped into one of its calms, leaving a lumpy swell, wet decks, and ragged t'gallants to bear witness of the squall's fury. We cleared up the mess, continued on our way, and now it was late evening with beautiful moonlight and a light breeze. The stars were extremely brilliant, and this latest transformation was most pleasant. I watched with fascination the shadows of sails and rigging criss-crossed wonderfully in some strange pattern, but now and again violent flashes of lightning kept reminding us that we were not yet beyond the zone of storms and dangerous gusts.

Throughout most of the day the mainland of Tierra del Fuego, and Staten Island, had been visible some fifty miles to the north-west. The former signifies 'the land of fire,' and at one time was characterised by volcanoes. It resembles a series of peaks. By 9.30 p.m. we had reached a position fifty miles east of Staten Island. The first Saturday night in the Atlantic! A fortnight had passed since I had last shaved, and usually I had been sleeping half dressed: but the end of

another fortnight was expected to find us in warmer and more settled latitudes. Perhaps even among the Trade Winds which we had discussed so frequently. And then? A good scraping and clean-up.

For the present our course was still east rather than north-east. On Saturday the noon position was Lat. 55° , Long. 67° W. By Sunday the latitude had not changed, but the longitude was 65° W., a difference of two degrees. It would be time enough to steer more northerly presently, and then we should be able to give the Falkland Islands a clear berth. After rounding the Horn at this time of the year the ice-line is surprisingly near the South American coast for a considerable distance. The wind had come north-west and gave us one of the hardest blows we had so far experienced, but it lasted only a short while; and the land being to windward, although so far distant, never allowed the sea to get really big.

None the less we were reduced to topsails and staysails. Whilst taking in the outer jib we had a little trouble, for the down-haul became jammed in the shackles and we were a good ten minutes hauling with all our might yet unable to shift it an inch. Meanwhile the jib flew about flapping madly, and the sheet with its block was being flung up and down with such velocity that had it caught a man's head there would have ensued instant death. We tried getting a turn round the capstan and heaving in that way, but discovered barely in time that the rope was fraying and might snap at any moment. Hellberg, one of those splendid and fearless rough-weather sailors, went out to the end of the jib-boom, stood up, grasped the stay and running tackle, and with his fingers gradually persuaded the shackles down the stay.

It was neither an easy nor a pleasant job, and it was accompanied by some danger; for stay and tackle were shaking alarmingly, so that Hellberg in holding on seemed perilously about to be jerked into the sea. The latter was being blown about the bows in clouds of spray like smoke, and the spectacle of the grey-green spume was magnificent. Finally, the uncertain weather became quite enjoyable, with a light fair wind, so that the gift of a peaceful Sunday afternoon could not be denied us.

During that time I noticed a considerable number of birds over the sea and, looking down more closely at the water, perceived that it was discoloured a curious dull red, whilst out of this there leapt thousands of tiny shell-fish. For many miles the redness continued with seaweed, and later on about the ship in shoals gambolled 'tumblers' and porpoises. The former are roughly twice the size of porpoises, having square heads more like whales. Jim became quite childish in his excitement, rushing on to the fo'c'sle head and afterwards rapping out all sorts of questions for us to answer. He failed to rouse enthusiasm among such a crowd, and we were not so fond of Jim as to waste much effort; so I put him off with the yarn that porpoises liked to tickle their tails on the ship's forefoot, and kept alongside in order that they could scratch their backs against the barnacles. He believed it all—every word—until I elaborated this statement with the addition that during heavy head-winds the porpoises went aft and helped to shove the vessel along. Only then did he realise that we were 'pullin' me damn'd leg.'

Every hour now was putting these heavy Cape Horn clouds further and further astern, and though we were still liable to strong winds this Atlantic weather seemed

altogether of a brighter and happier nature than the Pacific. Moreover we had now begun to steer in a more northerly direction, and by noon to-morrow ought to be abreast of the Falklands. At night the Captain still economised in kerosene by burning neither star-board nor port light. Our allowance of condensed milk consisted of two tins a week, and during the evening I was able to take a few drops, add water, sugar, some bread, and heat it over the fo'c'sle lamp. As the wick could not be turned up high enough, the water never quite boiled, and in any case we were permitted only half a pint of oil for the seven days; however, the 'silver tea' was consumable if little better than tepid.

We had rounded Cape Horn in Lat. 55° : by Monday noon we had got so far north as to be in Lat. 52° , and it did good to our hearts to feel that between us and Australia lay the solid continent of South America. I was aloft with the others bending a new lower t'gallant sail when we suddenly heard a shot. No question about it! The report of a revolver! We looked down on to the deck, saw the Second Mate with a smoking weapon and close beside him a body laid out doing its last kick.

It was a ghastly sight. The shot had been fired at two inches from the head, and now both Mates, the Captain, and Koskinnen were all wrestling with the form to collect his blood whilst still there was life. For it was one of our pigs which had been slaughtered, and to some of us it seemed a little sad that after cleaning out his sty all these weeks, cursing him and prodding him, we should now watch him put to death. But this hard windjammer existence had made us all so callous, brought forth so emphatically the elementary desires for sustenance, and deadened the finer senses, that we

had little use for mere sentimentalism. A dead pig meant fresh pork, and we looked forward with hungry anticipation to eating him: he was a less welcome friend alive than dead.

I stress such an episode as illustrating the immense influence of environment on human personality at the end of nearly seven weeks' indifferent food and perpetual warfare with the forces of primitive nature. Just as animals absorb the colouring of their surroundings, so a body of men thrown together aboard a sailing ship isolated from ordinary civilisation will gradually undergo transformation and take on a semi-barbaric character. When a score of people live in one small family for weeks, eating the same meals, sharing the same work, thinking the same thoughts, always complaining in concert, it would be strange if there was not evolved a certain common identity. And that connoted identity of desire. If any one of us in the *Olivebank's* crew had been suddenly given the chance of choosing some particular privilege, he would have selected a good substantial meal with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables but especially recently killed meat. We knew that our bodies were daily demanding these items as their reasonable rights; and only by adapting ourselves to circumstances, by an effort of will, besides a certain amount of self-mortification, was it possible to carry on. But suppose by some magic our fo'c'sle table had unexpectedly been discovered, on coming off our watch, to be covered with hot joints, tankards of honest ale, English butter and cheeses, even the weakest appetite would have required no encouragement.

So it was with us as we surveyed the deck from aloft. The deceased pig, that we had so often hated alive, now excited our imaginations beyond all belief; and that

it should dominate our conversation for quite a good period is indicative of the mental level at which our Atlantic civilisation now rested. With ridiculous celerity we fell to discussing the relative merits of salt pork and fresh pork, and at length concluded that the latter was most distinctly preferable. The local parliament having thus decided that point, we now considered the chances of enjoying some nice pork cutlets for tea, and unanimously agreed that the omens were most favourable. We got positively excited over such marvellous fortune.

Meanwhile the Steward, who not so many days ago had been frustrated of committing murder, now was busy with a bowl of blood which the Cook was to make into pancakes, a special delicacy aboard a sailing ship. The more experienced, 'hard-case' seamen who had often tasted these pancakes before, now assured us they were, in more than one sense, 'bloody good': but Jim confessed that any one could have his share. And the rest of us who were inexperienced new hands agreed with him. Personally, I loathed the very idea of cooked blood: the mere suggestion caused everything within me to rebel. But, simultaneously, I realised that there was no foretelling to what ends one might go when goaded by the pangs of a healthy appetite.

So the talk went on with scarce any intermission. The old hands could think of nothing else. When dinner-time came round, they ate little. When coffee-time arrived, they drank nothing. They were preparing their stomachs for a gluttonous guzzle. Tea-time, six o'clock, and the pancakes appeared simultaneously with a rush on the mess-dish. Jim bestowed his portion to Koskinnen. And I? It was a fight between sensitive feelings and violent hunger, during which the latter won and the former were rendered

temporarily unconscious. Very speedily I was devouring the black, leathery things with great relish as if I were as tough-minded as the ruggedest Swede. Those pancakes were unquestionably good when sprinkled with sugar and sauce.

Thus did I undergo one more stage in the change of disposition which had been going on ever since that day in Melbourne when I signed on to serve in sail. It is remarkable how quickly tastes and prejudices, life-long habits and trained choice, can all be swept aside one by one. There was a rumour that to-morrow more pancakes would be available, and I began wondering whether I should copy others' example and starve my stomach till the greater enjoyment at 6 p.m. Astrom, the hungriest and greediest man in the ship, took an especial interest when this new item of food came along. He spent his watch below, in the galley, assisting the Cook to do the frying. Subtle fellow, Astrom! With every pancake that he fried for the crew, he put one aside for himself, so that if he ate one he must have consumed fifty. Not content with that, he kept observation on the Port Watch when they came below, and tried to seize any bits which they might leave. Although he kept rushing from one fo'c'sle to another, I believe he got none.

The Second Mate to his other abilities now added that of butcher, and soon had the pig's carcass suspended in the rigging, cleaned, opened up, washed, and looking just as it would have done outside a butcher's shop: yet,

'I can't abide a butcher, I can't abide his meat.
Of all the shops his shop is quite
The ugliest in the street.'

But now came bad news in the form of a disappointing

anti-climax. The word went round that there would be no fresh-pork cutlets ! The only fresh pork to be consumed had been sent aft, and they were the pig's 'trotters,' which were assigned to the Captain and Mates. To-morrow the animal was to be salted. Another of those minor events which wounded our hopes ! Another frustration of our pent-up desires !

But all minor incidents were of major importance with us. That night we crept along in a grey mist about fifty miles east of the Falklands, for the sailing-ship track passes comparatively close to those islands. Many readers will recollect that a sailing ship even appeared on the scene of the historic naval battle off here. Commander E. L. Wharton of H.M.S. *Kent* has related how that after the latter had sunk the *Nurnberg*, and the darkness was gathering, and an ugly swell rising before the north-west wind, 'Out of the mist loomed up a great four-masted barque under full canvas. A great ghost-ship she seemed. Slowly, majestically, she sailed by and vanished in the night.' It was this same vessel, by the way, which earlier in the day had been sighted by the British battle-cruisers in action with the enemy's *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst*. She had been so long at sea that even by December 8 she was ignorant of war having been declared.

We in the four-masted *Olivebank*, during Monday, had therefore been sailing through an historic area, and at night the thick atmosphere demanded a good look-out. But during the morning watch (4 to 8 a.m.) the weather cleared, the north-west wind freshened, and for the rest of that day we sailed as well as we had done at any time throughout the voyage. The spanker was now set : at six in the evening Frank and I were sent aloft to unloose the crossjack, or mizzen course,

which is the large, lowest sail on the mizzen-mast. During the earlier part of the day this had been bent on by the Port Watch, and we set it for the first time. It was really light canvas, patched and old, therefore just one of the 'Trade Wind rags'; for which reason its appearance brought us great delight. That sail was an emblem, for it signified the Horn lay well astern and one day—perhaps not too far off—we should actually be in the Trades.

The reader by this time will have perceived for himself how readily we reacted to the changes and variations which affected our enclosed lives. A good steady wind had now enabled us to hop along with persistent speed so that it brought smiles on every face. All work seemed far easier, each man seemed far more companionable, than when we had been west of the Horn; and in general there prevailed a spirit of peace. By Wednesday noon we had arrived at Lat. 50° S., Long. 52° W.; which is to say that the Falklands had long since faded to invisibility, we were well out into the Atlantic some 800 miles from the mainland, laying our course over the ocean along a lonely track.

We were kept busy enough, washing the deck-rails and teak woodwork with strong caustic soda, salt water, and sand; but it was no small joy to be employed in the sunlight rather than chipping paint below, even if the soda did find out all the cuts in one's palms. The wind gave us a ten-knot gait for most of the time, and we were steering about E. by N. at present. Every day we should be reaching a position further north but also further east, and we should probably not pick up the Trade Winds much before reaching Lat. 20° S., which is more north than the latitude of Rio Janeiro. We expected also that at this time of the year we should

carry the Trades as far the other side of the equator as Lat. 20° N., that is to say, till beyond the latitude of Cape Verde Islands. Time would decide.

It was still cold of nights, and from Thursday to the following Monday (March 9) we were passing through the 'Roaring Forties.' There was not much during that section to make us glad, yet actually some of the fo'c'sle 'hard cases' had begun to fear an early arrival in English waters. No such trepidation afflicted me. The sooner we concluded the voyage, the happier I should be. That was how I happened just then to be feeling. It was a phase, and doubtless would disappear, yet sometimes when about to begin a five-hours' watch of scrubbing or some other unintellectual labour, I seriously wondered whether this trip in the *Olivebank* were not one long spell of wasted time.

Perhaps not. But it seemed a mighty big way from Melbourne to the British Isles!

If the 'Roaring Forties' were making me feel unhappy, there was another factor which caused keener discomfort. In spite of all rumour, we were given fresh pork, and practically all of us suffered therefrom. All, that is to say, excepting Koskinnen, Persson, and one or two others whose digestions were upset by nothing. I, perhaps, endured most inconvenience by this sudden change from salt meat and tinned food to fresh meat, and was completely knocked out: my delicate gastric mechanism collapsed. It would have been bad enough had this happened during calm, summer-like weather; but a wild night in the 'Forties' made endurance almost too difficult.

The ship was leaping into a furious sea, sail had been reduced to lower topsails and foresail, the decks were again a seething cauldron, and there was no hope of

getting a quiet watch below whilst the waters swirled and the gale growled. How one yearned, above all things in the world, for a quiet sleep and a sweet dream, for a chance to rest ! But no : from 7 p.m. till midnight one must stand one's look-out, a 'police,' and a 'wheel.' One must brace and haul, be ready to go aloft, or do anything the Mate should order. Certainly Koskinnen was good enough to do my trick at the wheel : otherwise I should have made a glorious mess of things. Even had I been able to keep an eye on the swinging compass, I should never have had the strength to stand up and hold the kicking wheel.

Four till eight a.m. ! What a life ! With throbbing temples, chattering limbs, and rebellious stomach, tramping round the capstan in company of the rest, hauling on jib down-hauls and sheets, clearing out the pig-sty, 'bunkering the Cook' ; then sitting down to the fattest fried pork and beans, ship's coffee, and margarine (otherwise yellow lard) ! However, amid these trials and tribulations there remained one element of hope, one handle by which to cling, one source of comparative relief. 'Things might be worse.'

They certainly might. And that assurance gave me a new courage.

CHAPTER X

LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES

NOT so very long ago one used to read lurid accounts of the bullying treatment which occurred in windjammers, and of the brutal way in which officers drove the men. I fancy there is very little of that nowadays. The *Olivebank's* Second Mate—officer of our Watch—was a thoroughly human being, and I was thankful to be one of his crowd. To me it mattered little that they considered him too easy-going and not the finest of sailors, though I knew what was really in their minds : by long tradition they actually preferred a Mate with still something surviving in him of the bully, who would always be alert to keep them at it. In other words, they wanted to be driven as well as led ; but besides all that an officer must be a first-class seaman or he would not be their superior.

This attitude can readily be comprehended in the explanation that a crew is rather a crowd than a collection of individuals : it is impersonal, and looks outside for a character more powerful and abler than its own, who will guide them and persuade them as much by his own example as the privilege of his office. I was not in a position to assess any one's seamanship, yet on the other hand I could appreciate that which is noble in a man's character ; and in my judgment the Second Mate was a thoroughly fine fellow. Admittedly, when giving an order he was inclined to mumble, but that was because

he happened to be a Finn and was uncertain of his English. He told me that our language was always found of great difficulty by his countrymen generally.

During these weeks we got to understand each other, and I should have greatly enjoyed his society had I only been in a position to talk with him as man to man. But I had signed on as a seaman before the mast, and it would have been subversive of all discipline for me to have presumed on my superiors. Perhaps, before coming on board, this barrier with all its implications had not been adequately considered, but time had not made it less real, and I could never get this consciousness out of my mind. Not in the least did I object to being the underdog, but I did miss the freedom of being able to converse with a fellow-mortal naturally.

It was a topsy-turvy life into which I had thrust myself, and even after the best part of two months afloat I adapted myself only with the greatest effort to this enforced obedience. It meant a revising of ideas and readjustment of values. It seemed strange and ridiculously odd to be treated as if one were back at school, and keeping 'cave' on the look-out for the 'Old Man' and Mates, just as one used to do for the Headmaster and his 'spies.' The ship discipline undoubtedly was good for one, yet there again it might be regarded as too extensive and all-embracing. So much remained that I longed to learn, yet it was forbidden me to enjoy real heart-to-heart talks with an officer possessing a certain amount of culture and considerable sea knowledge.

My messmates of the fo'c'sle were good-hearted fellows, yet lacking a lively interest in the affairs of life. It would have been a mental relief had it been practicable to enjoy the companionship and discourse of a higher

intellectual level. The monotony would have received a wholesome modification, the contrast would have been refreshing, and altogether existence could have been made less irksome. Nevertheless, I was fond of these companions and entirely resent the unjustified allusions to 'the piratical Scandinavians' of these windjammers. Their code of honour is high : it equals, if it does not transcend, that of any other nationals. I regard it as an insult to them that any one of their shipmates should be so ill-advised as to keep his sea-chest under lock and key.

From all that I have learned, the people who make trouble in these fo'c'sles are the one or two odd Englishmen or Australians. English crews have the reputation aboard such vessels of always grumbling, but Australians are hopeless ; and I am bound to say that so far as the *Olivebank* was concerned, I never heard grumbling from Finns or Scandinavians. We English growse in peace-time, in war, on land, or at sea, because it is our nature to. 'Oh, hell !' curses the English sailor. 'The bloody t'gallant, I suppose this time. Why the devil can't they wait until Monday?' But the Finn turns out on deck willingly and philosophically. 'It's what we signed on for, isn't it?' And so they put us to shame.

'Bunkering the Cook,' which always happened on Saturdays, could not be regarded in the Atlantic with any more pleasure than when the duty had to be performed in the Pacific. Somehow it always seemed to be my lot on each occasion to go 'down the mine' and shovel the coal into the buckets whilst the other fellow had the far preferable job of hauling up buckets and wheeling them along deck to the galley. This Saturday morning she kept pitching and rolling so abominably

that I was continually being thrown backwards into the loose coal, or the bucket would upset and I would have to begin all over again. During Saturday afternoon, instead of being free we were hard at work ; for the wind had died away, we were busy setting sail, bracing, taking in jibs and staysails, sweeping the decks. Even after I had finished my watch at the wheel and imagined there might be a spell of rest, away went 'One Whistle !' That blast signified that the 'policeman,' who kept watch for an hour after leaving the wheel, was required for some particular job which did not need the assistance of other men. Off I went aft.

This time it was to overhaul the buntlines of the mizzen lower t'gallant. Now this is a thoroughly foul affair when you are compelled to perform it alone, though with two or three others to help there is nothing to complain of. These buntlines consisted of four wires which passed through blocks at the mast, then along the yards and through blocks again over the forepart of the sail. Their use is for clewing up sail to yard when stowing, so that it can be furled and made fast to the yard by gaskets (or lines) which are passed round sail as well as yard.

You can imagine that when the sail was bellying out with the wind this stowing called for all one's strength ; though when once it had been set, the business of overhauling buntlines was just a matter of hauling up the wires and passing them through the blocks. You then had to hold in turn two wires with one hand, whilst with the other hand you made it fast by several lashings of rope-yarn. When an icy cold wind happened to be blowing, and your fingers were numb, your feet having none too secure a foothold, the ship rolling, and more than a hundred feet of wire pulling with its

weight downward to the deck below, no man could covet the task or call it easy.

For myself it was the most distasteful of all the seaman's duties. The mizzen-mast being so well aft, and in full view of Captain or Mate below, could under no circumstance be a place where to linger. On the foremast—perhaps yes. There you worked away from the poop deck's vigilance, so you could take your time and after the task was over even glance around. Should the weather be fine, there could be found great pleasure in contemplating for a few moments the white-crested sea below stretching for miles in unbroken solitude. This Saturday night, the wind having once more vanished completely, we lay impotent in the moonlight, sails squared to the faintest breath blowing from aft, but a big swell disturbing the night's stillness as the ship rolled this way and that.

Sunday was a wet, windless day, and the day's run amounted to no better than 66 miles. It was now the eighth of March and seemed a suitable occasion for a general bodily cleaning. I spent the watch below having a shave, tub, and hair-cut. It was Bill who carried out the last operation, and was rather proud of his art. ('Just picked it up, y'know.') In strict truth his efforts were a fiasco. Having no scissors, he relied solely on clippers. On this day the unfortunate Jim began a two-days' sulk and refused to speak a word, because Plenard said the lad's mother was Chinese! This made fo'c'sle life in no sense more attractive. To sit at meals opposite Jim's white face, loose mouth, and pink eyes, was depressing enough. About this time, also, the Cook discovered him to be an unnecessary nuisance in the galley, so turned him out. Altogether, Jim was quite disappointed with sailing-ship life.

Throughout Sunday night and Monday it blew a glorious fair wind accompanied by bright weather, and we were making good speed, the day's run being 148 miles, which helped considerably in getting us towards the end of the 'Roaring Forties.' Monday was the first day on which we could work comfortably minus a jacket, and be warm in bed with just two blankets. Great was the pleasure, likewise, of finding the fo'c'sle floor dry to one's bare feet. The wind was south-west, every day it was getting warmer, but against this improvement I had to reckon the loss of some clothes that I had been washing. They were hung out to dry and blown overboard. (Memo. for mariners : Pegs are no good at sea.)

The ocean's colouring had become very different from that of the Pacific, and a vivid green. After dark the porpoises playing round the ship's bows made beautiful phosphorescent wakes. Tuesday's run of 152 miles brought us to Lat. $40^{\circ} 50'$ S., so that we were practically finished with the 'Forties,' and to-day we bent two royals — on foremast and main respectively. Our mizzen-yard was on deck, where I supposed and hoped it might remain. In fine weather it was pleasant enough bending sails, though what with hauling, holding, and climbing, the work was tiring.

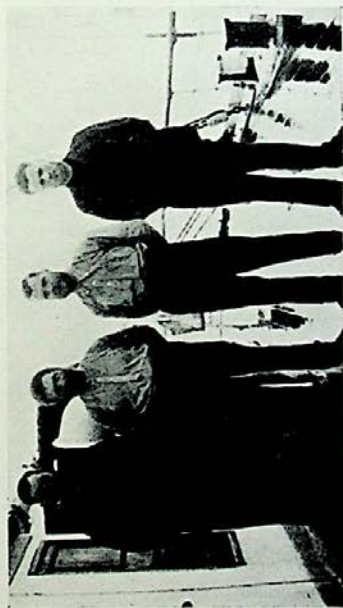
Before reaching the Trades it would be necessary to change every sail and replace them with our summer 'rags.' There was one exception : the mainsail. Since we possessed only one, this must remain. Perhaps that was why at the first puff of wind we always took it in with almost superstitious care. The custom is for the Port Watch to bend the royals, though in the *Olivebank* this practice (for some unknown reason) did not obtain, and the Port Watch bent the flying jib. We

still had the gaff topsail to bend, but then all our canvas would have been set aloft. Well, a few more sails to make fast, a few more buntlines to overhaul, might demand so much more labour, but also it would mean so much more speed towards home.

The Mate asked me if I were a good climber, then gave me a block and tackle, ordering me to climb up to the main truck where I was to make the block fast so that the royal (sail) could be hauled up thereby from deck. Now this command necessitated reaching, of course, to the very top of the main mast, and the heavy tackling would be slung over my shoulder, thus making the effort in no sense more easy. I must next slip the bight of the rope over the top of this masthead, and make fast, several hundred feet above the deck.

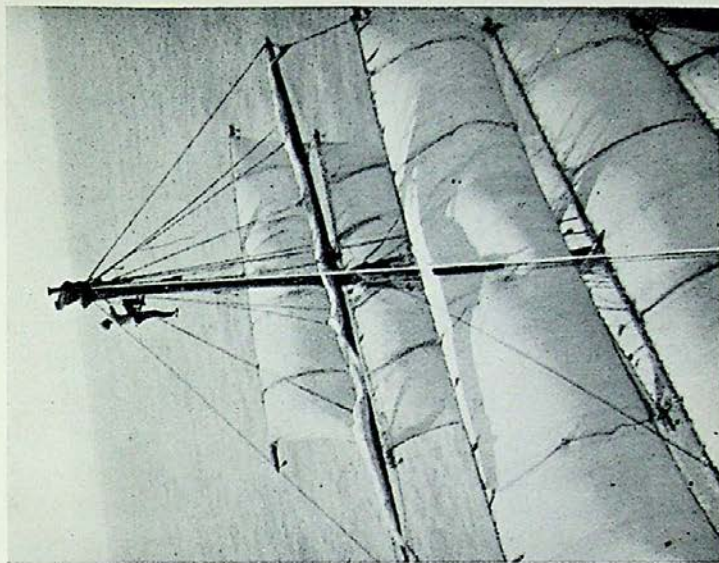
The main truck is the highest point of all, and I can remember the time when the mere thought of having to reach that loftitude would have struck terror within me. But now things were different; I had been too long at sea to feel giddy, and I really enjoyed the ascent. There are plenty of men who simply cannot endure heights. Bill happened to be one, and confided that he sometimes lost his nerve when compelled to go aloft; but he had been gassed in the war, and that had upset his balance. Frank, however, never seemed to mind very much. Always he was most careful and, when given a similar block to carry up the foremast for securing at this truck, he complained of being too old. (His age was twenty-three!) Actually he climbed and carried so far as the t'gallants, but from that stage let Persson do the rest.¹

¹ I must apologise to the reader if these sentences may appear too technical, but he will find everything quite clear after reference to the glossary and the illustration detailing the *Olivebank's* sails.

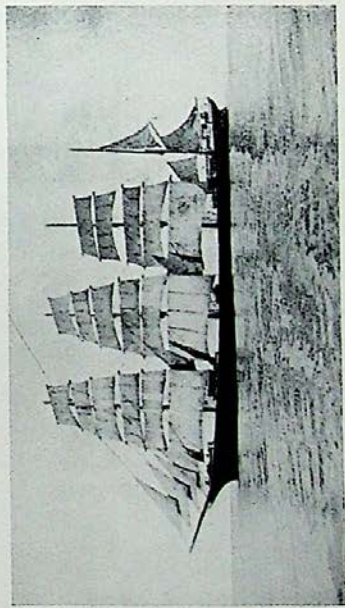


THE 'OLIVEBANK'S' OFFICERS

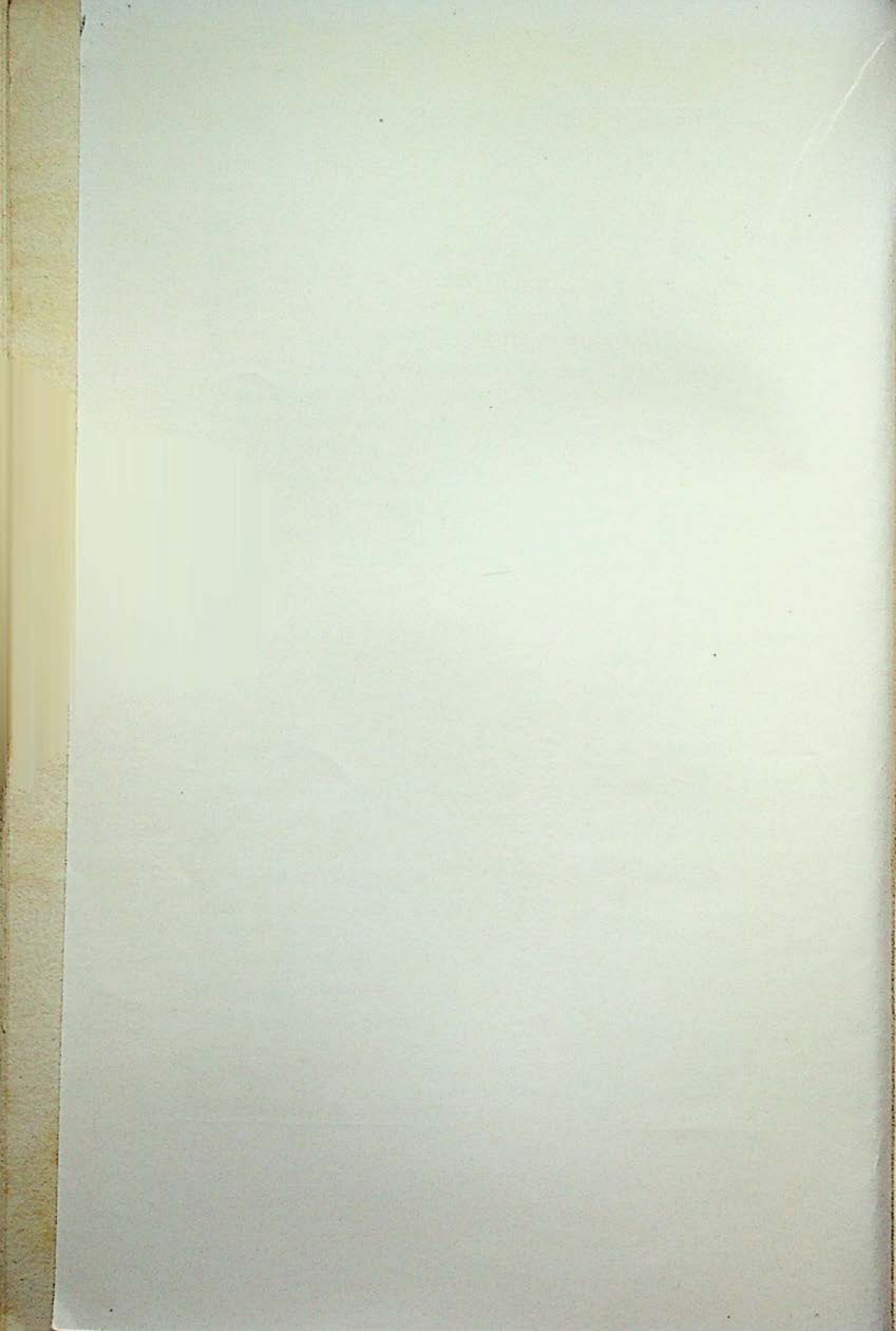
Reading from left to right : First Mate, Captain, Second Mate, Third Mate



UP TO THE MAIN TRUCK



THE 'OLIVEBANK'
In the Atlantic wearing her summer 'rags'



Like a recurring theme subservient to some main narrative, Jim continued to be a nuisance to us and a worry to himself. He was still nursing some grievance and at enmity with his shipmates, so I took on the rôle of giving him some fatherly advice. Having called him aside, I began by asking if he was above taking a hint ; because if he were not, I begged him for goodness' sake to take a joke as a joke.

'But they insulted me.'

'Insulted be damned. It's the last thing any of those sailors would do. Rather it's you who are now insulting them by locking up your chest and going round with the key in your pocket. Don't you remember that almost your first words to me, when I came aboard, advised me that I could safely leave things about, and that nothing would be taken ? In any case, matters will become no easier for you if you sulk. Laugh at everything ! Treat it all as a joke ! That's the only way at sea. Sailors must have somebody they can "chip," and if it should be you, why not try to take the jest in a good spirit ? Sometimes, I know, this may be not easy, but take little notice—just laugh it off.'

Jim thought it over, and answered :

'Well, you're an older man than me, and if you say that's the way, I suppose perhaps it is. All the same I wasn't brought up like that.'

But he accepted the advice, pulled himself together, revised his attitude, and became quite happy once more, so that life in the fo'c'sle was much less unpleasant for us all.

I had come afloat for the purpose of depicting life aboard a windjammer, but the life had been too full of other things for recording them pictorially. Nearly two whole months had gone by, and I had used my

paint-box once only : so now I made a second attempt. It wasn't a particularly inspired drawing, but my mess-mates showed a keen yet critical interest during the operation. For these fellows had the simplicity of children, and the inquisitiveness of a terrier. Whatever might happen slightly out of normal routine roused their curiosity immediately. Even the most insignificant action would bring them to your side, and it proves yet again what a remarkably primitive family a sailing ship's crew essentially is.

For example, to bring out a book and start reading would summon them all around you. Open the lid of your sea-chest, and it was like inviting the whole fo'c'sle to come and examine the contents. A new coat, or indeed any new garment, at once called forth considerable questioning. 'Vare you get dat coat? Leeverpool? Vad did you pay? Two pounds! Gee! Dat vas a lot of monee. But it is good coat. You must be reech!' By 'new' I wish to convey merely the idea that it had not been previously exhibited to their gaze. They were not less intrigued than would have been the Red Indians when they first encountered the White Men. Such incidents, trivial in themselves, show how entirely different is this little windjammer world from all else.

We were coming along fairly well up the Atlantic, but very rarely doing more than 150 miles in the day's run, and sometimes not even half that distance. On Thursday, March 12, we actually accomplished 149 miles, the previous day having dropped to 101; and now to the westward, distant many hundreds of miles, lay Buenos Aires. It was good to have emerged from the 'Forties' into the 'Thirties.' Most of the morning I spent slung over the ship's side washing the white

paint round her counter and poop. Not such a bad job, except that it placed me continually in the most uncomfortable positions—often being upside-down and clinging on by one's toes whilst washing off the soda which had cleansed the black paint. There wasn't much of it, but it had a nasty way of trickling down from the white.

In this washing process the Captain caused me annoyance by interfering. 'You must vash it all off.' But if only he had allowed me to do the job in my own way, I could have wrung water out of the rag, prevented the soda running down, and wiped the paint dry. Perhaps my method was not the nautical manner, for the Captain ordered me not to squeeze out the rag; but, as usual, I misunderstood him, and continued to act as above. This brought a quick reproof.

'Vat for you squeeze de vater out?'

'To get rid of the soda, sir.'

He shook his head so hopelessly, as if to indicate that I was completely beyond all teaching.

'Use plenty vater,' he snapped out, and I obeyed, though it seemed to make the job more messy and made twice the amount of work.

You may not quite believe me, but even to be just outside the ship, and standing over the sea, was such a glorious contrast with daily labour that I relished it in spite of being 'ticked off.' The change was invigorating, the sea an incredible blue, and I felt even a suggestion of freedom in this situation. Occasionally, when there came a clear patch of water free from foam, it was possible to look down and trace the whole ship's hull almost to her keel. The temperature of air and water was almost tepid, the sunshine fascinated, and at times became almost too hot.

Altogether life was considerably improved, notwithstanding the many items which could never be made more endurable. It was the cold and damp which had been so trying when further south, whereas now one rejoiced with an exceeding great joy that after jumping out of bunk and putting on merely shirt and jersey one could be quite warm on the fo'c'sle head, or at the wheel. Even the taking-in of royals became a simple matter, and the turning out on deck in the dark hours held no terrors now that the bitter chilliness had gone. Nor could we fail to appreciate the relief of discarding cumbersome sea-boots and heavy oilskins, each of which combined to make a man completely fagged out.

Of course there must be something left about which to growl. I am one of those people who like to sing whilst doing my work, but I noticed that the rest of the crew were always a bit diffident about joining in. One day Persson gave me the tip : the Mate did not share in my enthusiasm, so I made some inquiries. Apparently a man should not sing at his work : it was not done, and neither Captain nor First Mate liked it. Strictly speaking, I learned there should be no conversation whilst on duty, and the Port Watch was noticeably silent, though I had imagined this was simply because they were of less cheerful a nature. Actually it reflected a sterner discipline.

We all have our weaknesses, and the idea of having to restrain my emotions that way distressed me greatly. I happen so to be constituted that I must either sing or be unhappy. Unless I could burst out into song, I should soon be ill. The *Olivebank* might be a kind of floating prison, but she was not a convict ship, and why shouldn't we express the brighter side of living ?

What about the old sea shanties? One's whole idea of sea and sailing ships was associated with singing sailors. . . . So eventually I broached the subject to the Second Mate, who gave me great consolation by saying that he liked men to sing, and believed that they worked all the better when singing to themselves. So long as the Captain said nothing it was all right. I was glad to know that much.

The Second Mate and I could have got on together admirably. We also shared the same characteristic of liking cats, and often as he stood by me at the wheel by night he would have one of the ship's cats in his arms. Once he asked if I didn't find the work and life aboard rather strange. Frankly, the novelty had not yet worn off in spite of irksomeness of many things. For example, during those times when I felt far from fit, and common-sense demanded that I should go and lie down on my back in the sunshine, gaze up at the blue sky, enjoying life, I had to remember I was just a deck-hand. So, likewise, I must speak only when I'm spoken to, and not slacken up at my work.

Notwithstanding the wholesomeness of this discipline, it was difficult to convince myself that no longer could I be my own master; it still continued strange that I must bow my will to authority. Within a couple of months it had been impossible to change completely one's habit of mind, though I will admit that in many subtle little ways both officers and crew seemed to treat me a little differently from the rest. Exactly how, I can't quite detail, but the fact had not escaped me. Perhaps they never regarded me as a sailor seriously? Probably in realising that I was not one of their profession, and need not learn the whole art of spars and ropes, they avoided taking too much interest. At any

rate they were wonderfully patient and lenient in regard to my shortcomings as a seaman.

It was curious that we had a Friday the thirteenth both in February and March. According to the superstitious, something out of the ordinary should have occurred, yet it turned out rather pleasanter than most days. Perhaps Astrom did not find the maximum happiness that day, for he started his task on being ordered to climb up the mizzen and make fast a block near the truck. Twice he went up, and twice he failed : only at the third attempt was he successful. But then, having carried out this command, he dropped the bo'sun's chair, which after bouncing off a sail fell into the sea. It was certainly no joke climbing up and down that mast, and one missed the presence of a royal halyard chain for help, the only assistance being found in the royal backstay.

Astrom admitted he was no good as a climber, and lost his nerve on this occasion, which was regrettable at his age of twenty-one. He would have found the jigger-mast even worse than the mizzen. Plenard told me of a similar experience. Once whilst in port aboard this ship he was told to take up a block also to the jigger-masthead, and he did it. When he returned to deck he was in a state of exhaustion, and the reader will forgive me for reminding that when once above the crosstrees there were no ladders, and nothing except a thin stay by which to haul oneself up. Plenard therefore quite naturally had expended all his nervous energy, yet he was ordered to go aloft again and bring the block down. He protested it was impossible, that he was played out and couldn't do it again.

'But you must,' required the Mate. 'We need the block. Have a rest, and then go.'

Plenard rested for fifteen minutes, and then climbed right up once more. He cut his legs on the stays badly, yet he got there and back, whilst admitting afterwards that he didn't really know how he had succeeded. He trusted never would he have to do it again. Well, he certainly wouldn't during the present voyage, since the mizzen and jigger-masts were under the Starboard Watch's care, whilst the Port Watch looked after the fore and main.

During Saturday afternoon quite a bit of excitement fluttered through the ship. Persson, whilst working aloft up the jigger-mast, hailed the deck that a steamer was in sight. We looked, but all that we could see was a smudge of smoke. Hopes were raised that we might get a closer view, since this was the first suspicion of civilisation after sailing for exactly eight weeks. But the sailing-ship route up from the Horn is notoriously a lonely one, and that was the reason why during the Great War, when German raiders were ordered out of the Pacific, they were told to come up the South Atlantic by the windjammer lane.

We saw nothing more of the steamer, as our tracks failed to cross, and she disappeared to the southward with our keen disappointment. It would have meant a good deal had we made contact, but by the time we reached the altitude of the Canaries doubtless there would be plenty of shipping. Until then we must needs be content with our own vessel, its little bunch of humanity, an occasional school of porpoises, an albatross, the white petrel, and the black mollyhawk. Before long, however, we should be saying adieu to albatross, Cape pigeons, all the other ocean birds of the south; no less than to the Southern Cross and the Magellan clouds. How good it would be to welcome

The real cause of trouble could be summed up quite simply : his mouth was too big, and his skin too thick. No hint could induce him to shut up ; no remonstrance could prevent him from putting people's backs up. Thus, there was always great relief in the fo'c'sle when his duty called him outside. ' Jim's look-out ! ' someone would exclaim. ' Ah ! Perhaps I can sleep now.' Or, ' Perhaps I can read now.' More than once, when working with Jim, I had to ask him for Heaven's sake to close his mouth. ' You're worse than a bloody old woman.'

' Yes ? ' he would ask in mild surprise, and then continue to babble the most absurd nonsense whilst we were on the yard perhaps stowing sail or still climbing up. The irritating feature was that this could not be a worse time for inane remarks and foolish questionings ; yet he would always conclude his observations with an interrogation that he insisted must be given an answer. When a man is trying to give his whole attention to the job in hand, whilst balancing himself high above the sea, he has no desire to be bothered and distracted by a young fool, yet this sort of thing would happen to annoy one :

' Claude ? If one of the ladders gave, we'd fall ? '

No answer.

' Eh ? ' he would repeat.

Still no response.

' I was saying—if one of the ladders went down . . . wouldn't we ? '

Complete silence.

' Eh ? '

' Course we would, you bloody fool.'

' But a man has to take a risk at sea. Hasn't he ? '

No answer.

'Eh?' (Nothing could stop him.)

'Yes.' (Irritably, and in desperation.)

'Skipper cursed me at the wheel this morning!' (Expectant pause: then again.) 'Thinks I'm off the course.' (Another interval.) 'Eh?' (The silence continued till he resumed.) 'Yes, and comes trampin' round. *Forbunden!* But I were only a point off. And when he's went, I gets 'er back agin. She's easy to steer to-dye—isn't she?'

More silence.

'Eh?'

'Yes,' heatedly, 'but if she's so damned easy, how the hell did you manage to get her a whole point off?'

'Oh,' self-complacently, 'mistykes will 'appen to man—won't they? Eh? Don't *you* reckon so?'

'Yes, you bloody idiot: of course they will. And *your* father made a mistake when he begat you.'

'Yes?'

'Yes.'

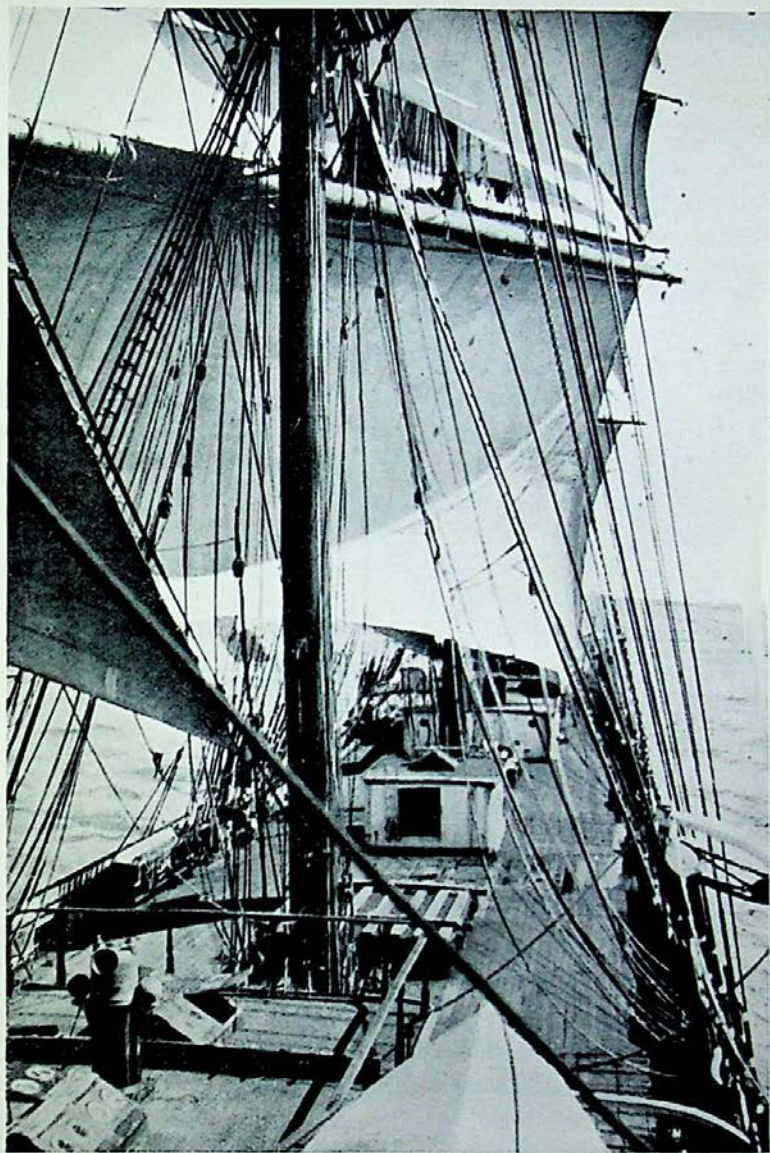
There were many reasons aboard the *Olivebank* for trying one's temper to breaking-point, but I rank Jim's stupidity as among the least endurable of all unpleasant items.

CHAPTER XI

TRADE WINDS

A NEW diversion came when we were ordered to begin tarring the rigging. Dipping one's fists into a tar-bucket and smearing with a rag is not the best treatment for an artist's hands, which should at least be sensitive and delicate. Nevertheless I thoroughly enjoyed this black job, standing about in the rigging among the white sails with the blue sea below. It was a sailorman's work, we were out in the sunlight, and the smell of tar was healthy, yet no one would have supposed I was accustomed to paint pictures. This was a strange life we were living through the Atlantic : a curious mixture of the casual and the hard-fast. I had managed to take half a dozen photographs, and it so occurred that the Captain of this four-masted ship was fond of photography : in fact he thoroughly enjoyed developing and printing ! So I handed him my six films to do, his charge for prints being twopence a time. He had the reputation of finishing them well, but this work had to be done during the night, seeing that there was no dark-room. I wonder what would happen to a seaman aboard a crack liner if he asked the Captain to print some snapshots at twopence each ? Truly the sailing-ship world is different from any other.

On Monday, March 16, our day's run was exactly 200 miles. This was for us a notable achievement, since during the voyage it had only once been exceeded



'A GLORIOUS FAIR WIND'
Coming up the South Atlantic



and that was when we did 206 miles on February 7 before reaching the Horn, though on February 11 we also made 200 miles. Otherwise, for the rest of our trip we never persuaded the old lady to reach such speed. Those who recollect the glorious records set up by sailing ships during the nineteenth century will mock at our poor efforts. The best run of the famous *Thermopylae* in twenty-four hours reached 354 miles, and vessels under sail have travelled even faster than that.

We were still pursuing our solitary track up the Atlantic, but the southern part of Brazil's coast was some hundreds of miles invisibly distant to the westward. And now a new order was issued which indicated that we were emerging gradually from lonely sea lanes towards that part of the southern ocean where the tracks of vessels cross each other and become focal off well-known points. For the first night since we had got clear of the Australian shore we exhibited our port and starboard lights, so the look-out was now told to inform the Mate that 'Lights are bright.'

The southerly winds were pushing us along, and from time to time tropical rainstorms would whip the sea into foam for fifteen minutes before the great clouds passed away to the south-east, creating some wonderful artistic effects. We were kept busy bracing the yards, taking in the fore-and-aft sails as the wind went aft, but next setting them again as the breeze came out of the north. After a day of calm, grey skies, rain and warmth, the wind suddenly changed and blew so magnificently from the south that the Skipper decided to take in the royals. Jim and I, whilst trying to furl our royal, had a tough task. The sail bellied out madly, and often flew back in our faces, threatening to knock us off the bucking yard. Fortunately the weather was bright,

the sail dry, so we managed to control it finally, but stowed it in rather a lubberly fashion. I disliked intensely having to work with Jim, and could have done the whole thing by myself at least as well if not better. But there was consolation in the glorious sense of motion, as the *Olivebank* created a speed of $11\frac{1}{2}$ knots, which was wonderful sailing for her. This was really an isolated burst, since the next few days' runs descended rather steeply to 147 miles, 128, 102, and even 33.

Another disappointment to me was entirely a question of personal health. We read casually of some ship arriving in port minus two or three men, lost overboard, killed by falling from the rigging, or merely 'died.' Beyond that we don't worry at all, turn over the newspaper as we lounge in comfort and safety before the fireside, but utterly fail to let our imagination penetrate beyond. Perhaps that is as well, or we should make ourselves miserable. But this wear and tear of human body and nerves aboard a sailing ship cannot be lightly dismissed. Here is stark reality, and until we have come face to face with it the truth is not in us. Up to now, at least, the *Olivebank* had lost no one either by death or accident, yet I had begun to appreciate what miseries a man in these comfortless surroundings must suffer if stricken by serious illness ere death should come as a happy release.

The internal pains, which were the preliminaries of appendicitis less than two years later, were responsible for these broodings, and made me understand how hard must have been the lot of sick men throughout the ages of sail-driven vessels. A seaman's duty demands his entire physical strength and energy even when he is at his fittest; but it becomes barely endurable to be at the wheel when racked by aches. The spokes seem

to prod you deeply ; you are doing your best to hold the ship on her course, yet the Captain growses, and the Mate is petulant.

‘ Keep her closer ; can’t you steer even yet ? ’

Or it may be :

‘ Ease her a little. You take off her speed so. ’

Such a criticism always occurred just as one happened to be a quarter of a point off the course, or when the wind had altered a half to a whole point. The officer refused to believe one had already noticed and had got the wheel over to ‘ take up the slack,’ as one might say. However, I was suffering too much inside to feel these taunts. For two nights I spent my ‘ police ’ doubled up on the step outside the entrance to the Captain’s quarters ; for since that occasion when Hellberg was found asleep, we had been ordered to keep the ‘ police ’ watch on deck. Similarly, when I kept my look-out watch on the fo’c’sle head, it had meant spending an hour of agony against the capstan.

Finally I determined to go and tell the Captain of my troubles and beg some biscuits in place of the Cook’s solid, sour, uncooked bread. The ‘ Old Man ’ was quite kind about it—none of that blustering bullying that one used to read about—administered a strong dose of medicine, and promised to tell the Steward to save me some biscuits in the morning. But the medicine did no good. Having been robbed of sleep for several days, and having become a little nervous about myself, with the knowledge that if anything serious should develop there would be nothing to do but wait till the end, I now found it barely possible to stagger aft down the deck to my job of tarring the mizzen rigging. There, dizzy and ill, I glanced up to behold an apparent endless number of stays that required tarring during

the next six hours. The outlook seemed so forlorn that almost I wanted to slip quietly over the side into the blue waters.

It was a long time before pride would let me approach the Captain and ask to be temporarily relieved. The action seemed so weak, especially as we were short-handed, and somehow I felt that sailors had no use for sick shipmates. But I was at the end of my tether, so I must risk being scorned and despised.

'Sick?' inquired the Skipper. 'All right! You can go and lie down.'

Heavens! I wasted no time getting into my bunk, and shortly afterwards the 'Old Man' came along with about a quarter of a tumbler of some yellow stuff, which tasted as camphor smells, and burnt like spirit; yet it settled my stomach, sent me to sleep, and won my gratitude. At midnight I was awakened for the 12-4 Middle Watch, crept out, but Persson (of his great kindness) offered to keep this watch instead. Nor did I refuse. During one of my free nights I could even matters by taking his place, and expected also to do some overtime in lieu of that which I had missed.

Gradually I began to feel better as the new day wore on, although we had some heavy work changing the foresail, but by tea-time I was for the while being recovered. The weather had become hot—we were only 27 degrees south of the equator—and presently would come a demand on stamina not less great than required by the cold. Well, we had surely got more than half-way through our voyage, unless long periods of calms and head-winds awaited us. Nine weeks were just coming to an end. Under what circumstances could it need another eight weeks to cover the remainder?

We now set the gaff topsail, and took down the life-

lines. Those two activities signified that we might now bid farewell to doubtful weather and should shortly pick up the south-east Trades. Where? Possibly in about Long. $22^{\circ} 20'$ W. We were now at about Long. 28° W. Already we had been experiencing southerly and south-easterly breezes, delightfully soft and warm, accompanied by occasional rain which came gratefully cooling to the body. But the tarring continued, and my hands were so firmly blackened that I began to believe they would never be cleansed.

I have previously indicated some of the ethics of fo'c'sle life, and would here add that the crime of all crimes at sea is for one shipmate to steal from another. That is the unpardonable sin according to the sailor's code. But to look round and lay hands on anything whatsoever, within the ship, that may be for the good of one's companions, this is accounted a virtue. Thus, for instance, as opportunity presented itself, we 'pinched' kerosene for the lamp, besides some odd stores, though especially sugar. During the present week I had twice been able to replenish my own sugar-tin. On the first of these occasions, I was in the galley when my eyes alighted on some sugar just at the moment when the Cook had gone for'ard with slush for the remaining pigs. I ran off to our fo'c'sle, came back with a leaf torn out of a book, filled the paper with sugar, placed it in my pocket and strolled whistling for'ard again. On the way I met the Cook, whom I greeted with 'Good morning' in my best Swedish. The theft had been brought off successfully.

The second attempt was far more exciting. It was Jim this time who discovered the loose sugar in the galley, put some in a Swiss-milk tin, and begged me to take it into the fo'c'sle whilst he finished making some

cocoa. Now as I stepped out of the galley and buttoned up my shirt (wherein was the tin concealed), I suddenly heard the Captain's voice. He was calling my name.

'Muncaster!'

Heavens! That was awkward. I pretended not to hear, hurried for'ard, and hoped it would be all right.

'Muncaster!'

Still I made no reply, but sped more quickly onwards. If only I could make that fo'c'sle door, get rid of the tin. . . .

'Muncaster!'

This time there could be no escape, for the call was followed by the blast of his whistle. I was very conscious of the tin bulging under my folded arms as I went back and stood before the Captain waiting for the deluge. Meanwhile there was an unpleasant trickle. For in my haste I had put the tin upside down, and now I could feel the loose sugar dripping determinedly down my leg inside and on to the deck. It was a most ridiculous position, ripe with suspense, and I was ready for the heavy hand of punishment.

But I have rarely been more surprised than when the 'Old Man' delivered his message.

'Muncaster,' he began, 'your photos are ready.'

It seemed the silliest anti-climax: the most absurd form of bathos. Was that all he wanted when he blew his whistle?

'And will you tell Persson to come aft with you at the same time?'

'Yes, sir.'

So, greatly relieved, I went off to reach the fo'c'sle before the stream of sugar had entirely spent itself. Not even Charlie Chaplin could wish for better material

than this incident, which so narrowly escaped being disastrous.

But now, with the last ten days of March, the weather suddenly and definitely took on a character that must belong to the Trades. Soft clouds floated up out of the south-east, the waves danced in the sparkling light, flying-fish came overhead, and the bonito swam about our bows in the clear ocean blue. Lovely, too, looked the rigging and sails in the steady sunshine, and the strong shadows were a source of fascination. It was Friday the 20th of March, and our noon position was Lat. $25^{\circ} 3' S.$, Long. $29^{\circ} 16' W.$ Therefore, according to some of our experts on board, this was too early for the Trades. Nevertheless the Trades these certainly seemed to be, and the Skipper apparently settled the matter by donning a somewhat soiled topee. This was another of those not unimportant domestic events in our simple daily round, though it looked a bit odd to see him going for'ard and help the blacksmith at the smoking forge.

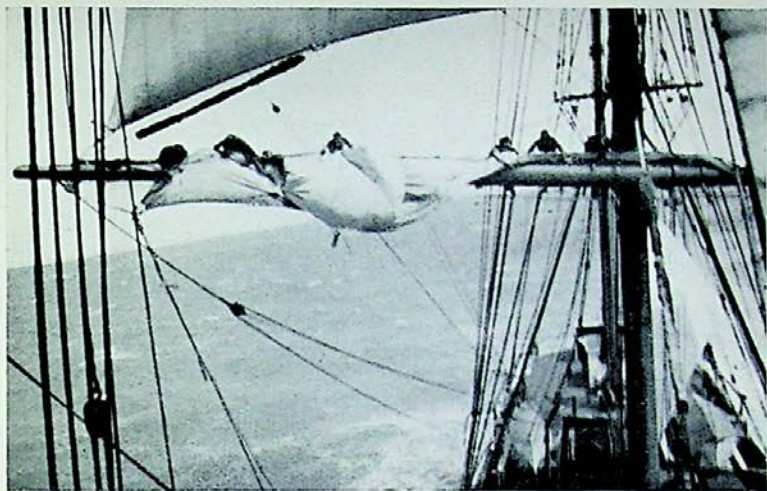
The latter had been very busy lately making a new fitting for one of the royal masts, which had split owing to the halyard chain slipping off the sheave in the centre, thus jamming between mast and sheave. The 'Old Man' was himself a good smith and fond of that work. He and the Carpenter between them, with the primitive forge and tiny anvil, produced quite a professional result : in fact I was always surprised how clever the 'Timberman' really was with such elementary tools. He could fashion almost anything from a chunk of wood, and was making a beautiful model of the *Olivebank*, which I hoped he would sell to me if completed before the end of the voyage.

No better proof of the improved weather could be

found than in our change of habits. The times when we used to wear oilskins or warm clothing belonged to the long ago. Already the nights were so warm that we slept out on deck. Nevertheless Koskinnen insisted that we had not yet reached the Trades, and the 'Old Man' was also heard to say that the Trades looked as if they were going to start from north-east. The wind shifted from SE. to NE., NNE., N. by E., N. $\frac{1}{4}$ E. ; then even N. by W. We steered by the wind, but finally when it came NW. we were too far off our course. At four o'clock in the morning, therefore, it was 'All hands on deck,' and we put her on the other tack, spending most of the day heading about east. A sudden ending to our ideas that all bracing of yards and taking-in of sails had ended for a week or two.

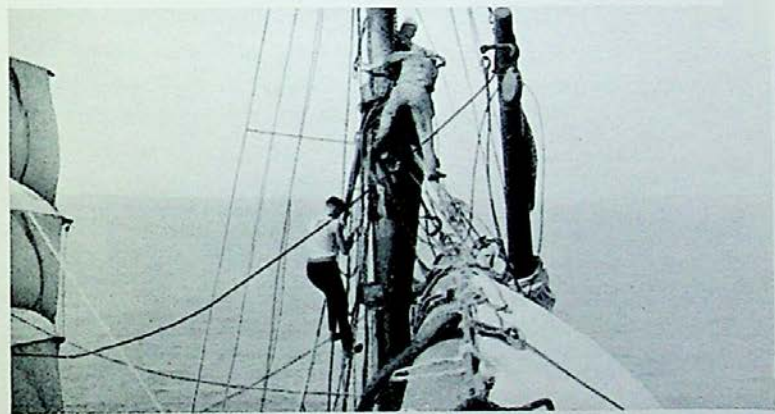
It was a busy day, changing every sail except about three or four. Our stout storm canvas was now stowed away, and our light summer rags—much patched, and quite old—were bent instead. This transformation for us crew meant heavy work, necessitating both Watches working hard the whole length of day in the hot sun : one continuous performance of running up and down the rigging, laying out on the yard : heaving, hauling, lifting. By the time that night arrived all of us admitted fatigue, yet I was less tired at the finish than when we started ; for in the morning I had again been a victim to that astounding lack of energy when merely to move one's limbs was forced labour, and to climb the rigging was a most depressing effort. Mercifully my strength gradually returned and I was able to carry on. Every one of us rejoiced when the job was done, for the present canvas would doubtless be kept aloft all the way home, and in any case it looked like being a peaceful week-end.

Sunday arrived, and again many of us argued that



FIGHTING AND WRESTLING ON THE YARD

Stowing the cro'jack



THE BROKEN FORE-ROYAL YARD

Sending down the damaged portion



the Trades were with us, but this time it was Sherblöm who refused to agree, and he was correct, although he admitted that they could not be far distant. We lay idly in a calm, then a northerly breeze introduced itself but soon perished, leaving us not merely without progress but even motionless, since there was an absence of swell. The blocks forgot to creak, and the sails remained asleep. The atmosphere was close and stuffy, causing us to feel heavy and languid as if all vitality had forsaken us.

In the Doldrums ! The day's run fell to 23 miles ! Calm, and then a flippant puff of wind from one direction, so we put the ship about. Ten minutes later another puff from the opposite direction, and we went about once more. Then, immediately afterwards, the rain: genuine tropical, drenching rain, that wet us to the skin in half a minute. Heat ? So fierce that to walk with naked soles along the deck raised blisters. And here we were bracing those blessed yards all the time ; next setting the spanker, and taking it in ; then the gaff topsail, only an hour later to take that in also ; hauling up the mainsail and cro'jack but loosening them when the puff returned. Sleep ? Impossible : the air was too stuffy. If you dozed off for a few minutes, you would awaken in a stream of perspiration. In the fo'c'sle there was no peace by day. If it wasn't the clatter of chipping hammers, it was the blacksmith's forge. When both these noises ceased there were my shipmates playing cards, and shouting with mirth at what seemed to me the stupidest and most childish of jokes.

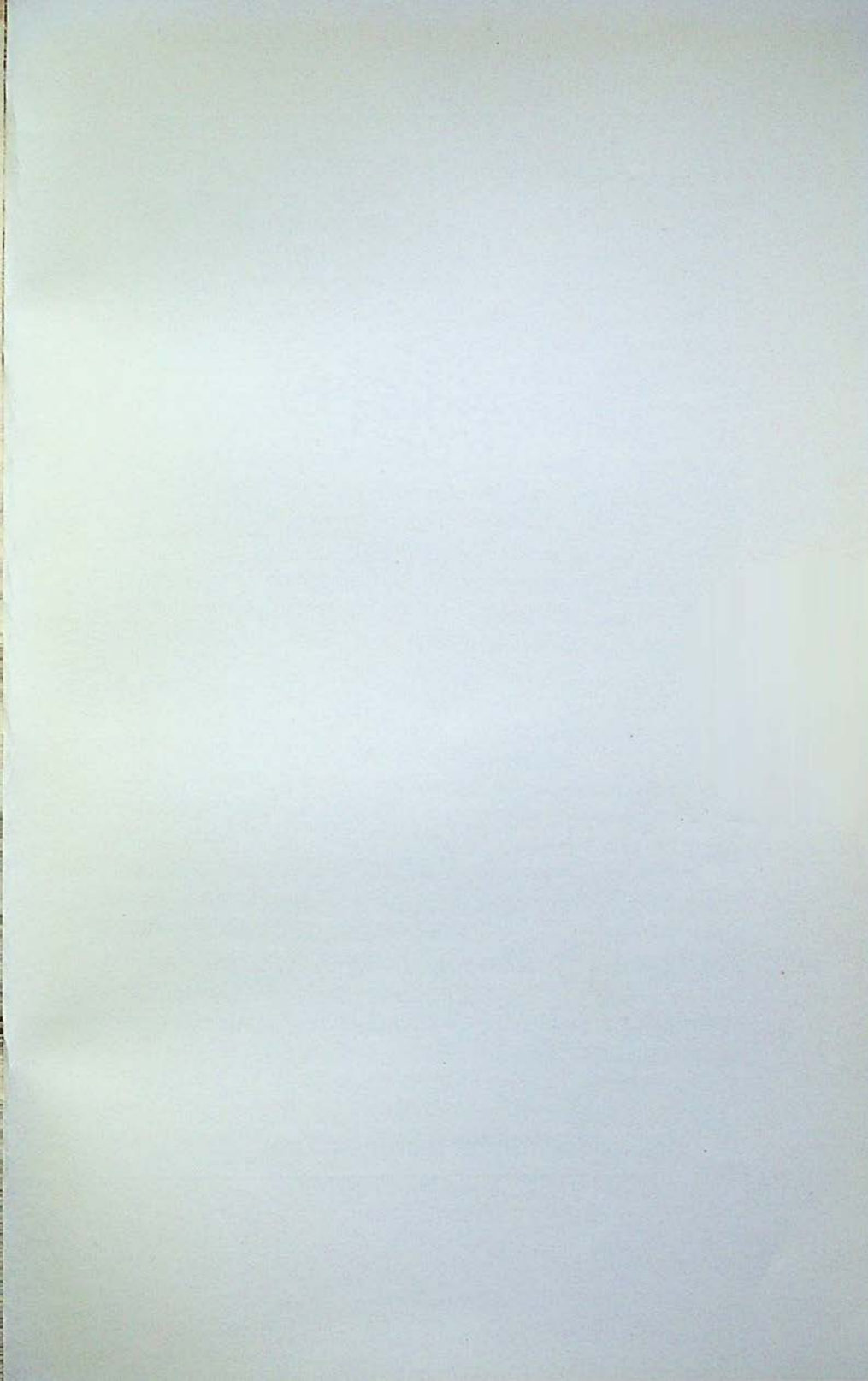
Escape out of this to the fo'c'sle head ? Well and good ! There I lay my mattress in the open, but either it would be too hot, or a rain-storm would burst, or some one come along and start talking. Solitude and

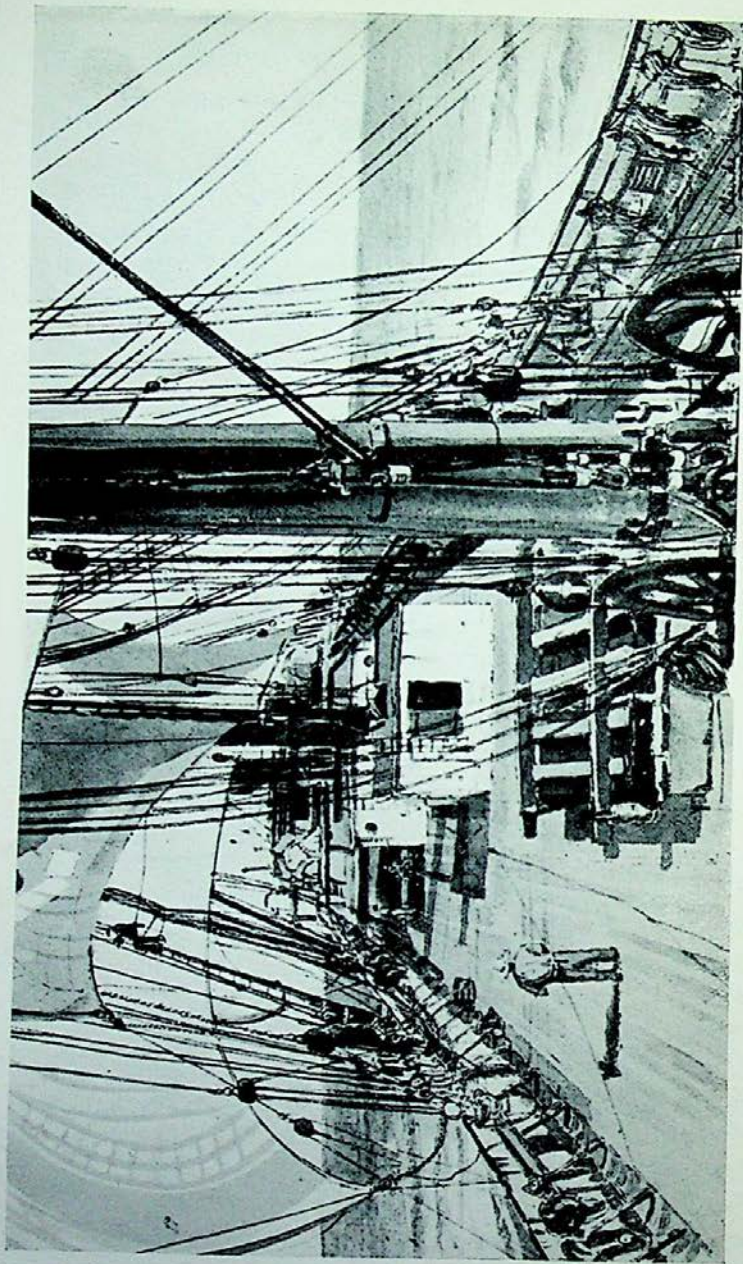
peace, an opportunity to commune with your own thoughts—these are impossible for a deck-hand. There is no getting away. Even at night when we snatched a little rest, the stand-easies were short and disturbed, and we often had to help the Port Watch in putting the ship about. In the darkness on such occasions we did incredibly foolish things—acts of bad seamanship—that we could never have committed during daylight and in a condition following rest. Somehow we made ropes fast which should have been left slack ; we tried to clear the sheets, but made a further complication ; everybody lost his temper, we all kept swearing at each other, and the Mate swore at us.

What a wearisome life ! What a night of unrest ! North-west, south-east ! Then an intolerable calm. And the days now became as aggravating as the nights, with such unsatisfactory 24-hour runs as 71 miles, 43, 80, 23, 73, 51 consecutively. In other words, day after day slipped by and we were just boxing about this way or that, making no real progress. There are few conditions more trying to sailors' tempers than this sort of thing, but especially at the end of so many anxious and wearying weeks.

And here I appreciated all that had been claimed for steam. However slow may be the tramp steamer, her crew do know this much : she keeps heading in the right direction, and each day spent means one day less before gaining port. With us no continuity of course or of progress could be ensured, and we might be weeks late in arriving home : the only certain feature about the voyage was its glorious uncertainty.

So we kept on growling, stuck to our jobs, hoped for the best, and gave little thought to the past. Lady Day, March 25, brought us a holiday: we had just been





IN THE TRADE WINDS

Observe the shadows of the rigging on sails

served with lime-juice and now received a daily portion of honey. It was on this day that the change of wind really came. Throughout the night it had been ruffling the water and falling away, but then like a soft breath it came gently out of the east. Lightning was playing around, dark storms hovered about over the starless sky, and sometimes raindrops fell. Then, immediately before sunrise, the clouds lifted, the easterly breeze freshened, and at 6 a.m. the 'Old Man' sent us to set the royals. He knew the symptoms well enough, he had diagnosed the situation with accuracy where some of us still doubted because of our inexperience.

'Sherblöm,' I inquired with eagerness, 'are *these* the Trades?'

'Yes,' he answered with assurance. 'The Trades all right dis time.'

Hurrah for that !

'Rolling home, rolling home,
Rolling home across the sea.'

We had picked up these winds in roughly Lat. 23° S., Long. 28° W., that is to say, at about the Tropic of Capricorn, and Rio Janeiro was away to the west. Now when Sherblöm settled our doubts it was as if the most essential world crisis had suddenly been ended. To us as individuals it meant that a heavy weight of work and worry had been taken from us : that we could for the present rely on the wind to look after the ship whilst we looked after ourselves. So the first effects manifested themselves when each man immediately set about to have a good wash. We had collected plenty of rain-water by means of every available bucket, and had filled thereby the starboard fresh-water tank no less than the boiler of the donkey-engine. Therefore

now we could clean both body and clothes. It was a great chance !

Even still more pleasant was the sense of motion. It was lucky that the arrival of these Trades coincided with that of a holiday, for we could now tidy up our possessions, pack away heavy clothes that ought not to be required again, and generally do those many little odd jobs to which we had hitherto been too busy for giving attention. And then, just after dinner, there was a cry which startled us all.

‘Land Ho !’

The announcement was so thoroughly unexpected that I, at least, imagined this to be a joke. Going out on deck, sure enough out of the haze ahead, rose the pyramidal island of Trinidada. This lonely land-crab mass of rock lies about 500 miles from the Brazilian coast, and of course will not be confused with the British West Indies island of that name. During the war it was the custom of German raiders for some time to use the South Atlantic Trinidada as a base, and many readers will recollect that it was off here that the armed merchant cruiser *Carmania*, of the Cunard line, fought and sank the German armed merchant cruiser *Cap Trafalgar* in one of the most celebrated duels of naval history. Not without interest, therefore, did I now gaze upon this desolate ocean obstruction raising its jagged line of sharp peaks 2000 feet into the sky.

All sorts of stories belong to Trinidada, and some of them were now being narrated aboard the *Olivebank*. It seems by no means improbable that in the olden days this island was used by pirates for hiding their booty. The legend is not quite dead, and during the nineteenth century one British yachting party of adventurers came here to excavate for hidden treasure but went away

unsuccessfully. The man-attacking land-crabs were among the least pleasant experiences of this party.

It was too late in the afternoon for us to get a good close-up view, though we passed fairly near. Very romantic it looked in the moonlight. There is an indefinable attraction to me in every island, and I longed for the chance of going ashore to explore. Trinidad struck me as the perfect expression of gaunt loneliness, except for the few birds which flew around ; and there is something extraordinarily dramatic in the appearance of this spot without any preparedness. Twenty-five miles to the eastward there certainly are some smaller islands, but they are just barren repetitions, and merely accentuate the unusual sight of land surrounded by the great ocean.

That was Wednesday. Thursday night was an exceedingly beautiful experience. There shone only a half-moon, but the sky was clear and the stars were brilliant. The breeze fell to a gentle murmur and, from seven o'clock till midnight, I had my mattress out on the fo'c'sle head to lie there and take in the supreme beauty of it all. No work of a painter can ever quite reproduce that transparent and luminous quality of a moonlit sky. The colour is so tender, and studded with brilliants more exquisite than the loveliest precious stones, however cunningly and artistically set. Nature is beyond all artifice. Each separate art may give a faltering glimpse of Nature's soul, but no more than this hint ; for our interpretation is but relative.

For all this, however, I longed most ardently to express marine beauty not merely as to its form and colour, but its movement, scent, and sound. But that is just where human effort is defeated, and one has to be content with a few splashes of colour, a few words scribbled here and

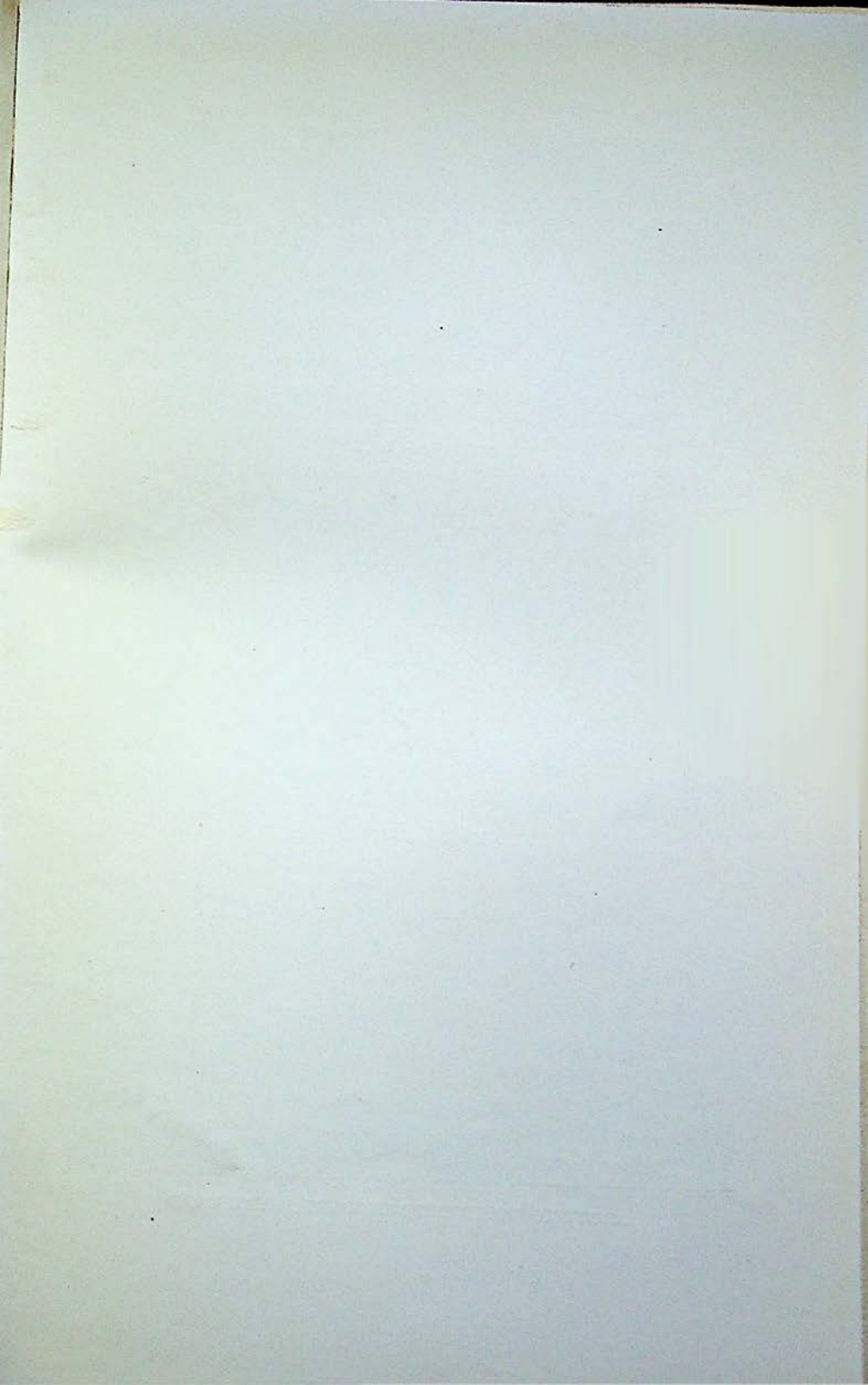
ound the Horn

of music would assist one in the back. Especially is all this ship, which has its own disbeauty of line and movement, special musical noises at the in-

ing and dreaming there came ring-notes of a fiddle. Twice chords, and then on the night tune of Finland, followed by real that were a delight. The with his foot, tap-tapping on then ensued an interval, a few ray bar or two, as if the player y for some particular melody. ld waltz-tune, and a Scandinyed, yet quietly and tenderly n his sleeping shipmates or of the night.

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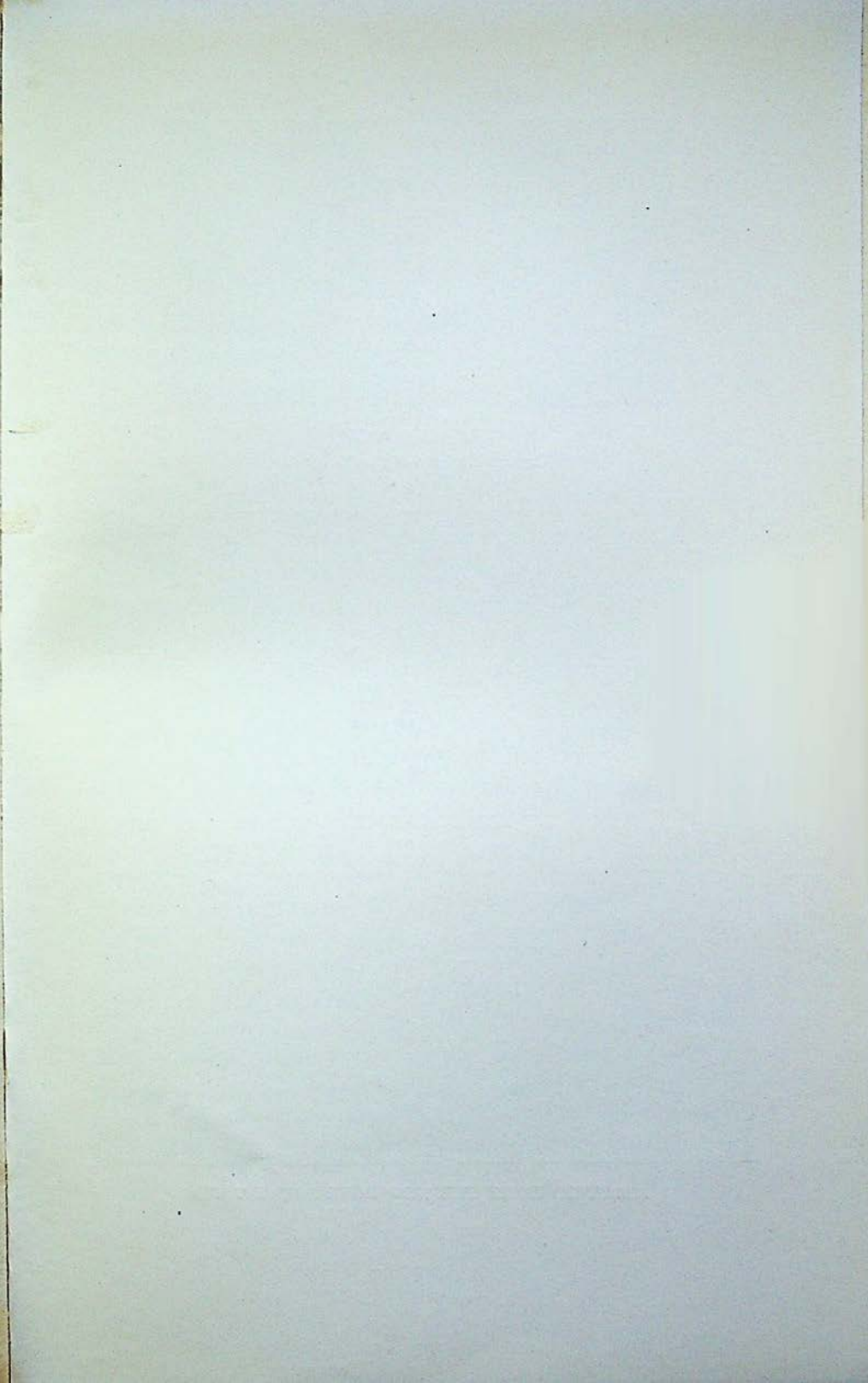
there : even a few notes of music would assist one in stating that which is at the back. Especially is all this applicable to the sailing ship, which has its own distinctive characteristics, its beauty of line and movement, its smell of ropes, its special musical noises at the influence of the winds.

Music ?

Whilst I lay there listening and dreaming there came quite unexpectedly the tuning-notes of a fiddle. Twice I heard the preliminary chords, and then on the night air burst a quaint dance-tune of Finland, followed by others with a lilt and appeal that were a delight. The violinist was keeping time with his foot, tap-tapping on the deck till the end. Then ensued an interval, a few more straggling notes, a stray bar or two, as if the player were exploring his memory for some particular melody. Then out would float an old waltz-tune, and a Scandinavian jig. Jauntily he played, yet quietly and tenderly as though afraid to waken his sleeping shipmates or spoil the beautiful serenity of the night.

I have heard that instrument played with a rare finesse and artistry by the most wonderful violinists living, yet not one of them ever appealed so deeply as Koskinnen's efforts in the moonlight beneath the shadow of our great white sails that mounted up and up to the starlit sky. It was a Midocean Night's Dream, and having fallen asleep I was awakened by Jim at twelve o'clock. But the moon had set, the night had changed its nature, clouds had covered the stars, the wind was breezing up. As we turned in for our watch below, squall accompanied by heavy rain suddenly burst with exceptional force.

It had spent itself in ten minutes, yet when we were roused at 3.45 a.m. we learned that this squall had





THE 'OLD MAN'

Captain Lindgren of the *Olivebank*



THE NEW FORE-ROYAL YARD



ABOUT TO HOIST THE NEW FORE-ROYAL YARD

snapped the fore-royal yard clean in half. Hard to believe such a curious story, yet when we reached the deck there it was sure enough, with part of it hanging down immediately above our fo'c'sle. But what amazing luck ! What good fortune that the yard had stayed aloft, instead of falling on deck ! Still more lucky was it that none of us poor sailors had been sent up there to stow canvas immediately before the accident ! Otherwise . . . well, the *Olivebank* would have crossed the equator more shorthanded than ever.

So the last Sunday in March came round and with it the opportunity to enjoy this Trade Wind weather. Up at 4 a.m., we had finished work three hours later, and each of us could relax as he preferred. For me it was an opportunity to make a few renderings in water-colour, but the conditions were none too helpful. To begin with, one missed the chance of steady painting from day to day ; and there was an absence of privacy. Whilst one realised that these impressions must be set down in the shortest time without mistakes, yet my shipmates would stare in such wonder that they embarrassed one. And this date suggested comparisons, which in turn roused up memories.

Here we were coming more or less parallel with the distant Brazilian coast-line through tropical heat. In Sussex it would be springtime, with yellow daffodils nodding in the woodlands and violets as well. The bold March clouds would be ranging across the sky, blue shadows chasing each other over down and new-turned furrow, where the white gulls follow the plough from morn till dusk. At noon the sun would be shining so comfortingly that folks just now would be turning their glad hearts to meet it, convinced that spring had come and summer would presently follow ; yet, for all

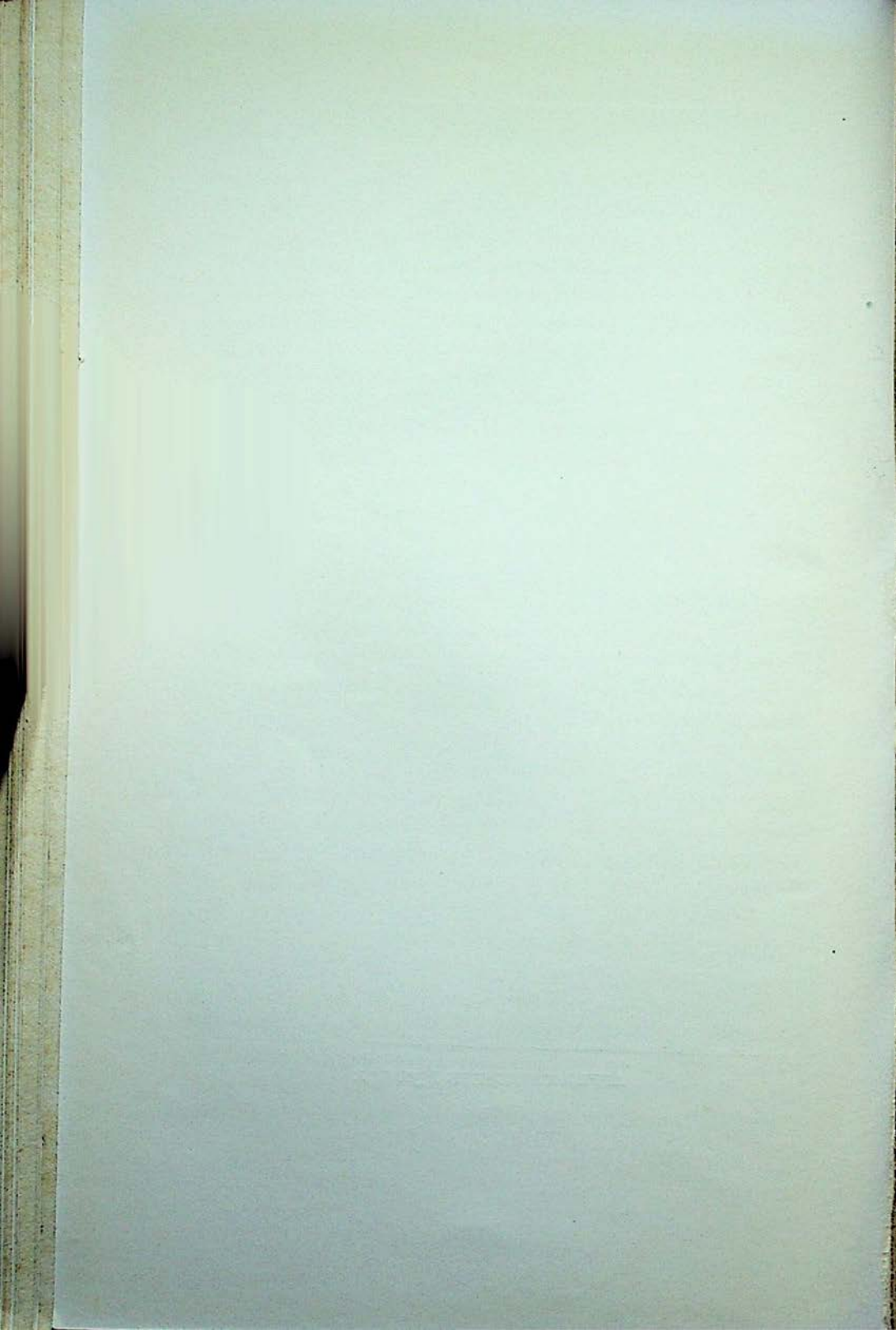
that, the wind would still have its treacherous power in the shade, and many people would wake up with a chill. Beauty is many-sided, so whilst there is wonder in the sweet smell of hyacinths and the winter bulbs which housewives nurse with such loving care, I could not deny the particular delight of sailing up the South Atlantic with the kindly Trades.

At the wheel I was told to steer NE. by N. $\frac{1}{4}$ N., a course which soon should bring us athwart some of the steamer routes that join South America to Europe. How long would the *Olivebank's* voyage last? Not even the Skipper himself could have answered that question, yet the general expectation was 120 days, and of that period already we had done more than ten weeks. We had been gladdened because now the wind had become almost normal and settled down with a more definitely south-east character. It was good to note that its steadiness increased and to feel its cooling moderation amid the equatorial heat. Life was very pleasant under these circumstances. After one more week, at the most, we should have crossed the Line, left the South American continent well astern, and entered the North Atlantic. Cape Horn, the Pacific, Melbourne, were so distant and dim in the memory that they might have belonged to some previous voyaging. Changes had recently become so numerous, that on deck there had been no chance for monotony, and gradually the day's run (though not worthy of pride) had improved so regularly as to send our spirits soaring as high as the royals themselves.

The figures had mounted from 23 to 73 miles, then followed a temporary drop to 51, but quickly recovering to 64, 90, 107, and 105. Thus, whilst we never touched the 200 mark again, and the Trades were not hustling us along, we could be thankful for the pleasant con-



APPROACHING THE EQUATOR



ditions. Most lovers of ships and the sea have a secret hope that before they die it may be permitted them to pass through these zones. To the end of my life I shall always feel a sense of gratitude that I had personal experience in one of the few surviving windjammers. Before I grow old the last of this sailing fleet will surely have departed, and there will be few men left even to remember the slatting of sails or the creak of a block.

CHAPTER XII

CROSSING THE LINE

I HAD resumed my work of tarring, finished the ladders and stays of the jigger-mast down to the deck, and then went to report to the Mate that I was 'unemployed.'

'All right,' said he, 'we'll fix that block to the head of the mast, and then rig up a bo'sun's chair.'

So I stared up at the masthead . . . and thought deeply.

'Get a block up there? Eh?' I reflected. 'Why! That's the job which Plenard told me about: the one he had to do whilst the *Olivebank* was in port.'

And I called to mind his final remark: 'Never again!'

But as I now looked at the mast, it did not seem so very far up; moreover, the topsail was set, I could go a good deal of the way on the side of that, and then it would be only a matter of about twenty feet more up a thin wire stay.

Perhaps I could do it. At least I would have a try. For Jim couldn't, and Frank wouldn't: yet that jigger-mast almost was the death of me.

Now a special knot was used so that I could adjust it myself whilst aloft, and lower myself down as requisite without causing the rope to be secured on deck, or necessitating a man to stand by. The Second Mate had shown me how to make this knot, and I actually

did it on deck before climbing up. But it is one thing to rehearse whilst your feet are solidly supporting your body : the circumstances are very different when you are high up, holding on with one hand, and the chain is swinging about menacingly. There is so slight a sense of security that it is not easy to think and act coolly.

However, I made the knot, but next did something further which caused the running part immediately to jam. The sequel was ridiculous, for I could go neither up nor down, but continued to be suspended in mid-air. The situation also pained me in another way : it hurt my innermost feelings, and rarely have I felt so disappointed. Just when I had imagined myself to have improved as a sailor, I made an absolute hash of the simplest knot. Now, in the determination to free myself and not request the aid of any one else, I struggled, kept on struggling, but with no satisfactory result. Indeed, the knot seemed to have got tighter than ever.

The Captain from below was watching my efforts, as also did the Mate : the former apparently with some anxiety, but the latter with annoyance. Again I tried hard, failed, and had to climb down the sail to confess my foolishness. Both officers took it quite well, and the Captain even seemed amused. He then sent me into the fo'c'sle, for coffee-time had come round. Arrived there, I related my troubles to a sympathetic audience, who made me show them exactly what I had done. Koskinnen was the judge.

'But dat vas right,' he acquitted me.

This verdict seemed somehow strange, and presently he came aloft with me, the chair having in the meantime been freed by the Mate. Again I showed Koskinnen how I'd made that knot, and once more he approved.

'Yes,' I pursued the argument, 'but afterwards I somehow got it over my neck.'

To which remark the experienced sailor made one concise criticism :

'Dat's vere you make a bloody mistake.'

So the mystery vanished, I had added to my seafaring knowledge, and continued tarring as before. To sit up there in the bo'sun's chair high above the deck, one's legs dangling in space, needed just a little self-accustoming. Whilst really no danger threatened, the sensation felt somewhat strange. It was April the first and I was engaged painting white the stays between masts. The method consisted of doing about four feet at a time, when I used to hail those below with :

'On deck !'

Either the Mate, or some one who happened to be on watch, but preferably some intelligent and reliable fellow who would not let go the rope with a run, then lowered me down another four feet. I never considered painting and tarring of rigging a bad job. Of course Jim could not forget this day, to keep up the traditional practical joke, and he certainly succeeded in making an April fool of Frank, whom he sent aft to the Mate, alleging that the latter needed him. Of course Frank was properly deceived, yet there was every reason, for the time was midnight, he had just been asleep and awakened from a deep dream of peace, though not yet in full possession of his wits.

Nor did Jim escape. Always we used to rag him for being the first at table when there was any interesting food about : but for once he arrived late, and came hobbling along with a pair of very sore toes. It was coffee-time, he had been asleep on the hatch, and would

have sprung out of bed with his usual alacrity when suddenly he became painfully aware that each of his big toes had been tied to short lengths of rope !

Yesterday we found a flying-fish on deck, the first I had ever seen fresh out of the water. It was a light blue above, silvery beneath, and its wings when stretched were very delicate and beautiful. As these creatures fly over the sea, they always remind me of tiny aeroplanes. And so the days went on, each with its subjects for admiration and delight, but also with many a sharp contrast. It was, for instance, a vast difference which separated the aesthetic pleasures from the rugged crudities. Whilst part of oneself remained lost in wonder at these tropical sea pictures, the other part was enslaved by environment. Could anything be less conducive to the beautiful than our fo'c'sle or the companionship of Jim, however excellent his intentions ? Still, such conditions prevented one from conceiving exaggerated ideas ; kept one's mind from soaring vaguely.

The petty hates and quarrels seemed out of place ; yet the slow progress, the heat, the utter weariness of seeing the same faces opposite to you, hearing the same tone of voice (and often the same threadbare jokes), were getting badly on the nerves of some. Very soon it looked as if Jim and Frank would be fighting each other, since for some time they had been continually at logger-heads. Then Jim would relapse into a terrible fit of homesickness, sitting at the table, head in his hands, and almost in tears.

'I do feel that bad,' he would complain. 'For the last 'alf-hour oi've bin thinkin' of me 'ome : it seems so far awye. Funny 'ow a man thinks of all the bad things 'e's done . . . like . . . you know. . . . Eh !

Well ! let's 'ave some music. Sumphn not too rowdy. I don't feel up to it.'

It was the unending character of the voyage, the want of variety, the scarcely bearable dullness when not able to lift the imagination beyond all present obstacles, which turned live men into sullen pessimism. But before long we expected to sight steamers, and that would put heart into those who must see to believe that European waters were not immeasurably far beyond the Azores. At present the *Olivebank* was moving between Africa and South America slowly and not without pain : yet nowadays airmen hop across this intervening bit of Atlantic in a few hours, and such achievements cause the sailing ship to seem a mere survival of mediævalism.

It was possible during these Trades to do some of my sketching and painting : a golden opportunity for pegging down, permanently, impressions of what can never be repeated. And then followed Easter Monday with its curious medley of minor events. Of course it was terribly hot, for we were only 3 degrees south of the Equator, but also it was a dead calm. Jim as usual made a nuisance of himself in the fo'c'sle, disturbing every one's peace, but we received orders to put the gig overboard, which enabled some snapshots to be taken of the *Olivebank* under way. It was the sixth of April and the first time some of us had been outside the ship since January 16 ; moreover, to-night we saw actually another vessel !

Next day we caught a shark, and the various parts of its anatomy were divided amongst the crew for different purposes. Several more ships were sighted, including a liner, but none of them ever came close : for we were crossing the track which runs from Monte-

video, Rio Janeiro, and Pernambuco, to England. Some of my shipmates also thought they could see a sailing ship ; Jim was certain, and even mentioned her name. Presently the ship turned out to be a cloud ! We were steering at present NW., but for the most part it was deadly calm weather, so that in three consecutive days we did only 58, 24, and 33 miles respectively.

During these periods in the Doldrums with periods of rain-squalls and intermittent hot sunshine, it was impossible to rest by day, and in consequence we felt terribly sleepy at night. The fo'c'sle comedy never ended, and now Sherblöm swore at Jim because the latter had been guilty of swearing ! Result ? Jim developed a bad fit of sulks and began spending his spare time reading the Bible, whilst the others took to playing chess and I read Galsworthy's *Country House*. For tea we ate the flesh of shark, and it was really very good though somewhat strong, and I must admit that a little goes a very long way with me. But that shark must have once bitten a human body, for in his portion Frank discovered a thumbnail !

Early on Friday morning, April 10, in Long. 32° W., the *Olivebank* crossed the Equator. It was one of the big events in a long voyage, yet there were no celebrations since all of us had crossed the Line previously. We realised, however, that after a period of calms we should next pick up the North-east Trades, and finally the Westerlies, which should carry us on to our port. So the British Isles were at least within the range of contemplation ! For the first time during our voyage the latitudes were henceforth all northerly. On the day before we sailed over the Line it was very noticeable that the weather quite suddenly cleared into genuine

North-east Trade type, although some of my companions would have it that we were not yet out of the South-easters. And this set me thinking. Assuming we had reached the North-easters already, we should have to carry on further west, and that would mean lengthening the voyage. Also we should find ourselves in the regions of cyclones, which some of us would not welcome eagerly. The more I got to know the *Olivebank*, the less confidence she gave me. At times, when we were set chipping a bulkhead, we chipped right through ; and some of the bolts had a way of coming off into your hand. To my thinking she was none too secure below, while in crazy condition aloft. The other night the Carpenter and Bo'sun had slung their hammocks from a ring-bolt under the bridge, but before dawn the bolt (being rusted right through) pulled out, so that both Carpenter and Bo'sun fell on to the Cook, who was below them asleep. This sudden double weight so terrified the Cook that he cried and hid himself in the sail-locker !

By Monday we had passed through the calm zone into a belt of exceptional rain, which caused us to toil frantically with tubs, buckets, and barrels, and to fill every available tank. Then out came blankets, shirts, trousers, vests, hats—everything that could be washed, in fact. It was a strange and amusing sight. So covered with clothing had we made the deck that there was hardly room to move. Clad in bathing costumes, shorts, or nothing at all, we scrubbed away, washed and rinsed both our clothes and selves. Was ever such a laundry ? And all the while we laughed and sang whilst the rain streamed down in torrents, the lightning flashed, and the thunder boomed with a note somehow different from that heard south

of the Line. It suggested rather a summer storm in England.

Then it passed, the sun blazed forth, and at every conceivable spot about decks and rails we spread our cleansed possessions to dry, so that the ship resembled one vast clothes-horse. From out of the north-east blew the breeze all day and steadily. Yes: the new Trades for certain! We could only hope that Queens-town would not be more than four or five weeks off, but nothing was more foolish than to promise ourselves even an approximate date. It was curious to observe how that almost as soon as we had reached the North Atlantic there was a definite transformation in sea and sky, which became softer and more atmospheric. Nor could this change be regretted. The Tropics were pleasant enough, and most people revel in the fierce sunlight with that deep blue sea. I myself like it—but only for a time: the brilliance for me was too metallic, too unsympathetic, too fatiguing. Actually at this stage I looked forward with some delight to the latitude where we should feel quite a nip in the air, and the skies would possess a softer quality.

I called to mind a remark made by the Captain of the *Favell*, who surprised me once by saying that during one of these sailing-ship long voyages it was possible to get tired of even your best friend. At that time I didn't believe him. But now I knew for a fact that he had in no wise exaggerated. The longing to get right away and be alone, quiet, free, undisturbed, became more and more insistent. I was so weary of the everlasting loud laughter in the fo'c'sle, the jabber-jabber in a foreign tongue. Instinctively I was always straining my ears and mind to catch the essential words, understand a phrase, pick up the threads of conversation.

The only consolation remained that if I happened to be reading a book, it was far easier to concentrate the mind when my ears could not filter the Swedish conversations.

Jim, too, maintained every justification for his unpopularity. We all in turn did our best to like him, but he was quite impossible. At last he came out of his sulks, but only because he wanted our advice on an unpleasant subject. His bunk had become infested with bed-bugs, and he desired to know the best method of getting rid of them. But what could be done? The ship abounded with these stinking insects.

Then he would discuss the models which the Carpenter, the Bo'sun, and Sherblöm were making of the *Olivebank*, and with tactless ignorance criticised them freely. In a loud voice he would ventilate his absurd opinions till those in the fo'c'sle who were trying to sleep refused to tolerate him any longer.

'Oh, orl right. S'pose if a bloke wants to sleep, I'd better let 'im.'

So with a bad grace he flung himself out of the door before one of his shipmates did it for him with boot and fist. Later on, when the rest of us began the Great Wash in the rain, Jim must needs wash the stuffing in his pillow, to our amusement. For many nights henceforth he would have to sleep pillowless, and the chances were that if we found a sunless spring, as we neared Europe, his head would have no dry resting-place till Queenstown.

During the last couple of days the ship's speed had risen, so that we did 126 miles one twenty-four hours and 131 the next. This could be regarded if not with satisfaction, at any rate without discouragement; but our floating home this mid-April had become no more

habitable than an English house is reposeful during the period of spring-cleaning. The fo'c'sle was in a state of turmoil, and it became useless to put everything back till we had finished redecorating, for the bunks kept on being splashed with red lead or grey paint. It was most unsettling to have one's gear scattered about all over the place, and some of it outside on the hatch.¹

More disturbing still was the expectation that within a very few weeks we *might* be at anchor inside Queens-town's spacious harbour. It was like being back at school when you used to count the days towards the end of term, and as each week slipped by the time began to drag so that you grew more and more restless. Three long months had come and gone since leaving Australia : with luck we might have only four more Sundays aboard this old packet ! How wonderful the thought !

Meanwhile it heartened us that the North-east Trades were blowing with persistence, and they even worked up to such force that in the night we had to take in royals and gaff topsail. To hear 'Two Whistles' made quite a change during the dark hours : the monotony was all banished when we found ourselves on deck fumbling with halyards, buntlines, and clewlines. In fact, so

¹ It was whilst spring-cleaning our fo'c'sle that some of the old paint on the for'ard bulkhead was removed by the strong caustic soda to such an extent that there became partially revealed the portrait of a fair damsel in a state of *déshabillé*. Inasmuch as I chanced to be the artist of the crowd present, I was requested immediately to bring my talents into action. So, with crude ship's paint and brushes, I set to work and satisfied the exacting desires of Mate and crew. A year later, when the *Olivebank* was lying in the Thames, I revisited her, and on entering that familiar fo'c'sle, derived no little amusement from finding the portrait still intact. It was neither tarnished nor rusted, but there was evidence that some painstaking Finn had repainted the lady with meticulous care.

long ago was the time since we took in sail, that I had almost forgotten how to do it.

The sun set in fine golden haze, and the sea was a soft blue, but in the morning we had to lower the mizzen staysail in a hurry as it started to disintegrate during a squall. This was bad luck for the Bo'sun, since it kept him busy sewing on a new patch through most of Sunday morning. I have already mentioned that we were now using our old sails, which were so ancient that you could see through them, and so disfigured with rents here and there, that a heavy puff of wind might cause a 'Great ravage,' as 'Belgique' would express it when I played chess and checkmated him.

I could feel myself getting into a condition of indifference now. The ship life during all these weeks had made me its prisoner, robbed me of my freedom, taken away my will, so that I could not believe I had ever done anything else but the duties of a deck-hand; nor would it matter so enormously if the next four weeks lengthened out into eight. And this restlessness seemed to be spreading in a marked manner. Quite usual was it to hear a man uttering :

'Vat de hell shall I do now? First I do a little of dis. Den something else. But gee! I joost cannot settle to anything. Ah vell! One more month! And den? My voord! My voord!'

And looking back on the events at the earlier part of our voyage, I found it difficult to believe that they belonged to this, rather than a previous, venture. So overwhelmingly does a windjammer enslave your memory, your physical strength, and your very spirit, that I could scarcely think back beyond that day when

first the Trades inaugurated a fresh routine. How much more readily could one now understand the distressed feelings, the rising desire for mutiny, which history keeps on narrating about sailing ships of the past—explorers, buccaneers, men-of-war, whalers, merchantmen! In most cases the whole trouble arose through sheer boredom, unrelieved by any hope of better days.

Truly no one can fully sympathise until he has himself suffered.

Change of wind? When could we expect that? Probably not till Lat. 40° N., somewhere west of the Azores, would the Westerlies be picked up. Might it mean once more the rain and cold? Oilskins and sea-boots? Spending most of the night watches aloft? Unbending our delicate old sails and rebending the stouter ones?

Perhaps it was better that we had no power to gaze into the future.

Strange decisions a man makes amid all such suspense! I bought the Second Mate's accordion for the sum of ten shillings, yet was very annoyed at first to find that a note was missing, and one of the chief notes too. However, one learns to be adaptable, and I made a new spring out of a safety-pin. All was well, and great was the demand for this instrument by every one. During the rest of that day you would hear it being played in most parts of the ship. Various tunes would be attempted by various practitioners, but with the same invariable result created by a lack of talent. One collects articles that would have no interest ashore, yet I now was the owner of a concertina, an accordion, and four mouth-organs. They had all become rusty, and not any of them could I play properly, yet they gave me

no end of pleasure experimenting. As far as possible I got away from other people before starting these efforts, lest there should descend on me an unpopularity as heavy as Jim's.

And now came the task of tarring the decks, one of the preliminaries before making the ship look smart for the eyes of shore folks. Chipping, scraping, leading, and painting were all done with great thoroughness, though there were rusted plates where in some spots we simply dared not chip lest we should go right through the ship's side. Otherwise not an inch of plating, not a bolt, not a stay or stanchion had we missed: the Mate's vigilant observation prevented the slightest omission inside and out, aloft and below, from truck to keel. How fed up we had been of this chipping and scraping! How endless it had seemed! But friends ashore would be certain to ask: 'Whatever did you find to do whilst at sea?'

Although we were still sleeping on deck, the weather had got decidedly cooler. We should have preferred the fo'c'sle, but just now were men without a home. Not merely was the fo'c'sle in a state of wild confusion, but the paint on our bunks had not yet dried. So I had a hair-cut, and (as previously) Bill made an awful mess of the operation. Food began to indicate that the voyage must end ere long, for the potatoes daily became blacker, smaller, and more musty. Bully-beef was now relied upon as the general dish at almost every meal, but served up in the same horrible, greasy manner. In spite of this our tempers now improved, and day by day our mutual happiness became more pronounced: we had passed the limit of the Tropic of Cancer, though as far west as Long. 42°. Away and away to port were the West Indies, to the north-east was

Madeira, and in between ran the great steamship lanes across the Atlantic.

The Sargasso Sea ! Of course I had often enough read of this area with its weed, yet never imagined I should go through it—and in a sailing ship. Whilst there could be observed seaweed without stint, I really expected more abundance : but that mentality can be explained because of having read so many cheap ‘thrillers,’ which told gruesome stories of ships being dragged down and of the octopus with its suckered arms doing its deadly deeds.

Now whilst we were all busy with our ship-painting, and the Starboard Watch always managed to keep ahead of the Port Watch, the wind had gradually gone round to SW. We had (as we believed) lost the SE. Trades in about Lat. 18° N., there had ensued a day of calm, but very soon we expected to find the breeze going round to West. Then, quite definitely, would we be on our last lap. The word Queenstown now scarcely left our tongues, rough calculations were figured out, and we reckoned that not more than three weeks, or less than 3000 miles, separated us from the Irish port. It was a consoling thought.

I had tired of the noise and closeness of the fo’c’sle one day, and my hour doing look-out was immediately to follow Hellberg’s, but I had joined him prematurely on the fo’c’sle head for a yarn. The wind had fallen away, the sky was overcast with that mackerel effect which foretold a fresh breeze coming, but at present the ship lay on an even keel and no motion of swell broke the glassy stillness.

‘Really think we’ve seen the last of the Trades?’ I asked Hellberg.

‘I tink so.’

'In that case we shall be in Queenstown sooner than expected?'

He laughed. Then paced once or twice between capstan and starboard lighthouse.

'Hard to say. Maybe plenty time at sea yet.'

'But how long?'

'Three weeks? Maybe six. Who can say vot kind vedder ve meet hare in Nort Atlantic, or off Irish coast?'

'Surely not six weeks? It couldn't be quite so long?'

Hellberg laughed. There might be head-winds, and there might be flat calms. In any case, after three and a half months at sea another six weeks wouldn't hurt us.

Oh! Wouldn't it? I thought otherwise. I had reached the pitch when the prospect of home affected me with such uncontrollable restlessness that three weeks would be just tolerable, provided also that not a day longer were demanded. It was the suspense, the uncertainty, the possibility of prolongation, which kept me in a state of dissatisfaction.

Out of the west suddenly came a warm breath, ruffling the water as it approached. The sheets creaked through the blocks, the sails filled, and for a moment the water gurgled under the bows. Then once more the breeze forsook us, leaving the *Olivebank* without motion on a smooth, glassy sea of vast loneliness.

Harsh and loud the voice of Hellberg broke the silence.

'Dat vos de first of de Vest Vind,' he asserted confidently. 'You see! To-morrow we change de sails.'

And he was right. Next day, from early morning till late in the evening, we were busy bending our storm

canvas in place of the old summer rags which had brought us through the Trades. But heartily did we curse the 'Old Man' for his timidity and caution. Surely it was now the late spring and almost summer? How unlikely that we should meet with any heavy weather, and most certainly the other canvas would have seen us through!

Thus we reasoned among ourselves, but the Captain had a barometer in his chart-house, and it was falling. He knew what we could not teach him. Not the first time he had been in the North Atlantic, this, and he had no intention of being caught napping in a four-master manned by a short crew. The nett result for us turned out that we worked all Saturday morning in double watches, and no free Saturday afternoon was possible. None the less we congratulated ourselves that if it did come on to blow hard, we should run before it all the faster, and be home all the sooner.

The reader will have noted that although we had left Australia in January we had not spoken one ship; and I stress this point because nowadays sea-travel is so extensive; at all hours of the day and night vessels of every sort are pursuing their way across the oceans of the world, yet the route round the Horn still remains remarkably unfrequented. Not till April 24, that is to say just fourteen weeks out from Melbourne, did we signal any craft whatsoever. It seems scarcely credible that we could have been under way for more than one quarter of the year yet without contact. Thus great excitement arose when we sighted a steamer. I was at the wheel at the time, but my watch ended before she came close up. We then hoisted our name with a four-flag signal, which the other ship answered, after which we made, 'Report me to Lloyd's.'

This she likewise acknowledged, blew three blasts on her whistle, hoisted 'T.D.L.' ('Wish you a pleasant passage'), and continued on her course. She had approached within two hundred yards, and it was curious at last to have been in touch once more with other humanity. In these modern days, when even some sailing ships are fitted with wireless, we in the *Olivebank* might have been classed as old-fashioned as a galleon. On the day that I came aboard this ship I had put the clock back, and stopped several months of personal progress. Come to think of it, we score of men, belonging to different nationalities, were deliberately turning our backs on a whole century's improvement in transport. Marine engines, oil fuel, safety devices, gyroscopic compasses, and hundreds of other items so familiar to the liner of this present era, might never have been invented. We were still fumbling along in an undeveloped age, and had Nelson or Drake, or even Columbus, come aboard, they at least would have known that the *Olivebank* was merely a more efficient *Santa Maria*, a better *Golden Hind*, and not so very different aloft from the *Victory*.

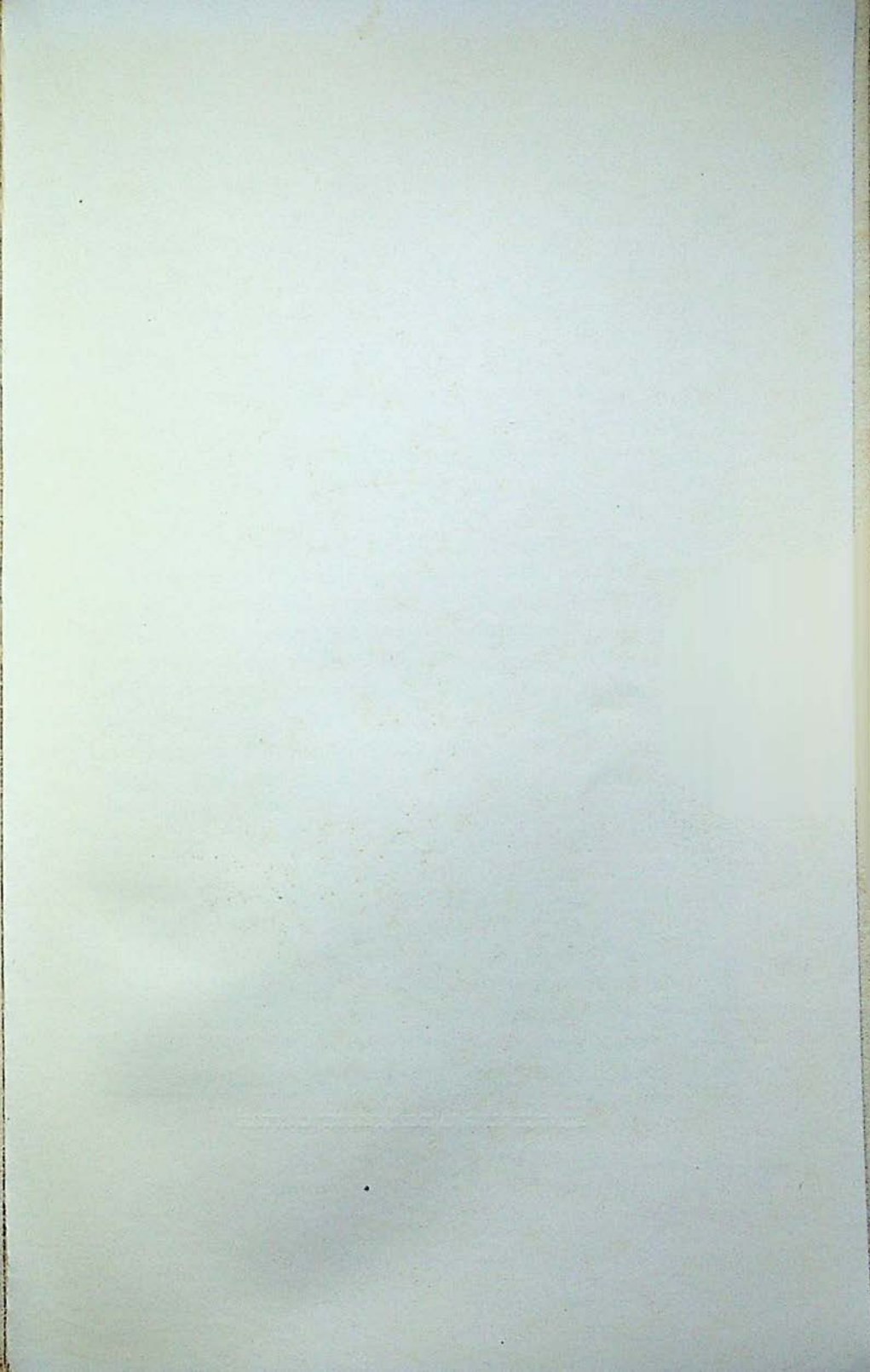
Yes : we fellows were really a set of 'back numbers,' so from that steamer's deck both our ship and ourselves must have seemed almost museum-pieces. And the inference follows that notwithstanding all the noise, the bustle, and crowds of twentieth-century life, it is still just possible for a man to get right away from it all whilst travelling across the globe. Not merely can he leave international civilisation behind, but he will see and do things which would be impossible even as passenger in a tramp steamer.

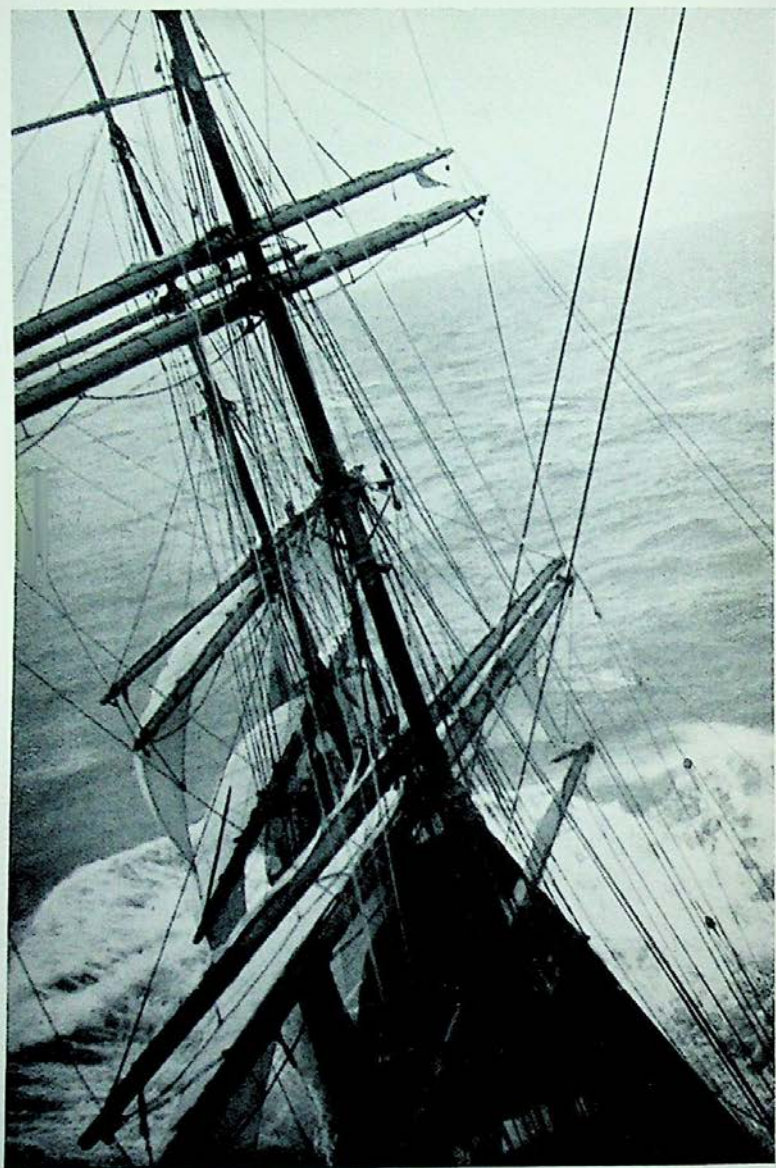
For even Jim, whom we had all been ragging, actually caught a dolphin that was a brilliant blue with a lemon-

coloured tail ; and such an opportunity would have been out of the question except aboard a slow wind-jammer. Of course the Australian became more unbearable than ever. One day when he and Frank were at work on the main-royal yard they had a fine squabble. Then in the fo'c'sle Jim got a proper dressing-down from Astrom for not having learned his job. As ever, Jim the thickskinned answered back and contended with an independence tinged by insolence. Some one suggested there should be a competition between Jim and Frank as to who could get in a royal first, but the youngster was not keen.

On the last day of April we spoke the Hamburg-Amerika liner *Orinoco*. Again arose mutual excitement with whistling and shouting from both ships, as the steamer circled once round us. She disappeared from sight, left us to our simple life, and again my shipmates addressed themselves to that nuisance whose name was Jim. This time it was Koskinnen, who gave him a sound, healthy, manly lecture, dealing with sea-tradition and the time-honoured law of the fo'c'sle. The latter is not merely the forepart of a ship, but the crew's parliament, wherein the representatives of a great brotherhood do something besides eating and sleeping. It remains as one of the oldest institutions afloat, where problems are debated and threshed out till, by general consent of those assembled, some guiding principle is decided upon. The contrast between the self-sufficing young Australian, airing his views on education (by which he meant science, mathematics, and chemistry), as opposed to Koskinnen's higher ideas (extolling the dignity of a sailor), was an interesting study. The latter, with no little conviction, spoke not only of the hard times, hard cases, hard knocks, and hard driving by

bucko Mates, but above all, concerning the privileges of an A.B., adding that he thought the able-bodied seamen had been too good to Jim, too soft altogether, and that the Mates likewise had shown excessive consideration to us deck-hands.





STAGGERING UNDER SHORT CANVAS

CHAPTER XIII

LAND HO!

THE North-east Trades, in spite of our previous impression, did not end till we were about the latitude of Madeira but far out in the Atlantic at Long. 46° W. Here, as Hellberg had rightly surmised, the change began.

It was on Saturday, May 2, that we had changed to our storm canvas, and during Sunday morning the light westerly breeze sent us to the braces, so that by Eight Bells the ship went bowling over the ocean with everything set doing about seven knots. By Eight Bells in the evening this wind had freshened considerably, we had been compelled to stow cro'jack, mainsail, royals, flying jib, and upper t'gallants.¹ The glass continued to fall, oilskins had to be produced once more, and those who had neglected to oil them in preparedness now discovered that the tropical heat had caused these coats to perish.

The weather looked bad, and by 5 a.m. of Monday the wind had backed to SSW. We were running free before a hard gale, and had taken in all our fore-and-aft sails. It was good to have this powerful energy at the back of us, pushing us rapidly homewards. Whilst we spent hours aloft in the pelting rain snugging her down gradually to foresail, lower topsails, and main upper topsail, we tasted again the old experiences

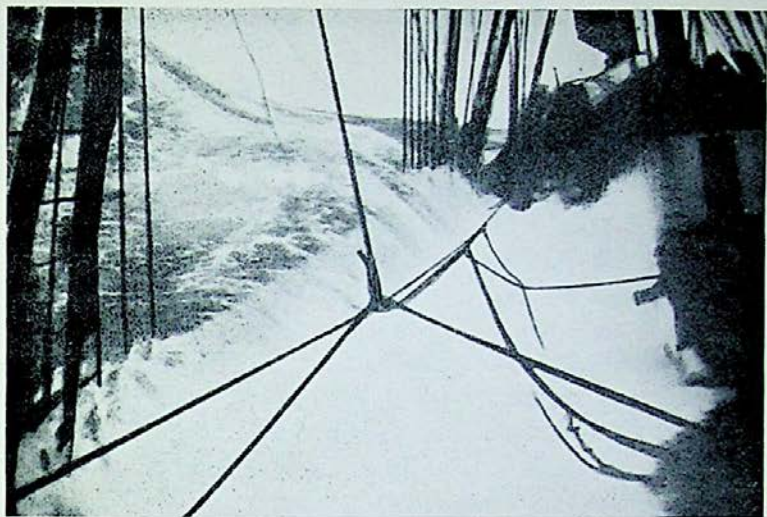
¹ See sail-plan photograph in Chapter III.

thousands of miles to the south : yet our mood to-day differed entirely from those Pacific times.

To begin with, we were now a better-trained crew who could go out on a yard with confidence and without anxiety. On deck, even if the surging waters filled her up to the rail, we knew how to get about and dodge danger. Besides, the *Olivebank* ceased to scare us, because we had learnt her character and understood how much she could put up with.

But, apart from all these considerations, we daily felt more and more elated for the reason that the harder it blew from any westerly direction, the more quickly would this voyage end. The gale might pipe up till it swept some of the sticks out of her, so long as it left us with enough spars to carry on. Yes : we were speeding in fine style. We laughed and sang the more loudly, for the girls had got hold of the tow-rope, and there could be no more hesitation. During these days the *Olivebank* excelled herself and surprised us all : for hour after hour she logged her maximum speed of $12\frac{1}{2}$ knots.

The gale grew stronger and stronger till it was not far short of hurricane force. The seas, even to us who called up recollections of the past, were terrific. The decks naturally were full of water, we had double watches at the wheel, and it was a magnificent spectacle as the waves curled up and broke around. To stand presently on the fo'c'sle head and look aft fascinated one, whereas some weeks ago it would have struck us with horror. The ship seemed more like a rock, over which the tide ebbs and flows : she was so covered with water that occasionally the galley and waist were entirely submerged. Then a veritable mountain of green would come rushing up from astern with such assurance that the *Olivebank* appeared destined to be swamped in-



A wave breaks on board



Burying her lee side

NORTH ATLANTIC WEATHER



evitably. One held one's breath, the suspense eased, but the thrill lingered. She had risen to the wave which had then passed harmlessly beneath.

With this rate of travel the great wind at length carried us so determinedly onwards that we could almost visualise Queenstown just beyond the horizon. Surely these days of glorious speed must have brought the distance down to three figures : the port could not be more than 800 miles away ? We ought to be there by Wednesday night. Our spirits soared like rockets, we were intoxicated with hope. Let everything rip ! Let the gale increase ! Let nothing hinder this rapid progression !

I mentioned our expectations to Hellberg.

'Wednesday night, Hellberg, this ship will be in Queenstown.'

But he was the complete pessimist, prognosticating head-winds and calms.

I laughed him to scorn, but he stuck to his opinion.

'I tink,' he answered, 'you make plenty certain of your chickens before they hatch.'

And again he was right.

We did not reach the Irish coast by Wednesday, but on that night, having reached Lat. 51° (that is to say, some fifty miles short of that land), we were ordered on deck and sent aloft as the gale had passed, the weather had cleared, and there had come another calm. During the next day we still lay without any driving power, so we deck-hands began the old noise with the chipping hammers. It was a return to monotony, but orders are orders, and the ship likewise must obey the wind's fickle dictates.

Friday morning brought us a light breeze from the north-west, by whose aid, and with the yards on the

backstays, we made about twenty miles of Northing between sunrise and noon. Considering we had every stitch of canvas spread, this was another disappointing day, although during the afternoon the breeze had freshened and backed a couple of points westerly. This last phase revived our sagging hearts, so that we began prophesying with the same assurance.

'Mid-day to-morrow we'll be off Queenstown.'

So we sang loudly, chipped harder than ever, and the ship was covered with little bits of red rust. She would need a good washing-down with caustic soda if she were to look her best on reaching port. With the fresh paint about her decks and houses, there would be little evidence that she had come round the Horn: only her top-sides indicated the rough times the *Olivebank* had suffered. So the quay idlers would doubtless expect us to have had a nice, enjoyable, yachting trip!

On Saturday the wind still held, but the usual free watch in the afternoon was cancelled, Frank and I being ordered to clean out the pig-sties. The third pig had been killed and salted some three weeks ago, and now it became my job to take up every plank from the sty flooring, thoroughly cleanse it from the accumulated filth of months, scrub each board, and replace the same. Nor was I sorry to have the job finished. It was one of those lovely May afternoons with a typical English sky, and now a light following breeze. To be cleaning pig-sties in such weather seemed all wrong, and I wanted to be standing my own look-out on the fo'c'sle head in the expectation of sighting land. 'Better men than you have done worse jobs than cleaning out pig-sties,' remarked the Second Mate. And I believe he said it to give me consolation.

For several days the sea-gulls had been following the

ship, and when I first saw one on Tuesday I became absurdly excited. Frank accused me of being sentimental, and rather laughed ; but I pointed out here was the beginning of the signs which denote land. For we had never witnessed one gull since leaving Australia. They prefer the company and food to be found near shore, so it rejoiced me greatly when these familiar objects flew into observation again.

And this same afternoon we began to see the smoke of many steamers, which still further proved that we must be approaching shores of some sort. Inquisitively, I went aloft and, through my glasses, made them out to be steam trawlers. Now this announcement brought the Mate for'ard.

'Vot makes you tink dem trawlers ?' he demanded.

'Well, I know a trawler when I see one.'

But he still doubted my word, said that it was unlikely we should see trawlers so far off the coast ; that if they really were trawlers, we must be nearer the shore than estimated, and the chronometers must be wrong.

The Mate went aloft to see for himself.

'Dey are trawlers all right,' he confirmed, and went aft to tell the Captain.

This was exciting news, and we must be no great distance off south-west Ireland. If only the breeze would last, we should assuredly see the Fastnet light to-day. Shortly before midnight I again climbed aloft, and was on my way to the fore-royal yard, but in the t'gallant cross-trees I encountered Hellberg.

'Dere's no need to go higher,' he assured me. 'You can see it already.'

He had spoken wisely. We were still a good way off, and the Fastnet light was below the horizon ; but we could see its flash in the sky.

'Every five seconds a white flash,' was the description in *Pearson's Nautical Almanac*.

We counted the seconds between the flashes.

Five seconds each ! There could be no possibility of mistake.

'That's the Fastnet right 'nough !'

A strange cold shiver crept down my back : it was that same sensation one feels when thrilled by a deed of heroism, or exalted by some exquisite piece of music. But now the reason was the consciousness that a long voyage had finally been brought to completion, that a great effort had been crowned with victory. It was just four months since we left Melbourne, and all this while had we kept in mind the vision of the Fastnet light. For about 15,000 miles we had contended and steered in the hope that we might have the reward of sighting this outpost of the British Isles, and it represented the prize for all our discomfort, illness, despair, and physical striving. Four months of perpetual warfare against wind and sea, Nature's armed forces : but now it was almost the end.

Sunday morning ! The south of Ireland !

There was no need to call the Starboard Watch twice : we rushed on deck without dressing, and up to the fo'c'sle head. Bill pointed to the nor'ard.

'There it is. There's your bloody U.K.'

Yes, by Jove ! There was the good, solid land : the first we had discovered since passing Trinidad six weeks ago. How different the conditions then !

The high coast lay peacefully under the sunrise of a perfect May morning, the green tops of the mountains illumined by the rays, and the soft scent of earth drifting over the sea ; a perfume that seemed as rare as it was

pleasing. And then followed the smell of peat fire, which delighted the nostrils to ecstasy.

But this welcome land, appealing to our senses so powerfully, made no difference to the ship routine. At 6 a.m. we turned to as usual. We were gloriously pleased with life, nor did the Mate forget to make the best of our good spirits. He actually set us to paint the poop rails ! That seemed almost an insult, and in any case it savoured of making us do overtime. We criticised it with that blunt nautical language which belongs to Cape Horn windjammer crews, and we let him learn of his unpopularity : yet, because the land was visibly so near and our happiness so upraised, we forgot our resentment and proceeded with 'the Mate's bloody painting.'

Now the sun, having mounted towards its zenith, killed the wind and left us to lie all day about ten miles off the land. Not merely did we cease going ahead, but the tide drifted us a little distance back to the westward. Did we care ? Not a bit : we were in the mood—or at least I was—of a man seeing the gate of his garden after long absence from home. It was such fun with the glasses to penetrate the hills and valleys, to behold the signs of people and houses, to witness the restful green of country at the end of much wandering. Once we saw a whisp of smoke and thought it must be a train : the suggestion made us as excited as children with new toys. There could be no denying that civilisation had come nearly within our grasp again. Moreover, we were right in the very track of great shipping, and that gave us considerable interest.

Inspired by the thoughts of entertaining visitors on board, we spent part of Sunday washing and mending our clothes, besides cleaning out the fo'c'sle. We even

hung neat curtains across our bunks and scuttles. We dug out our shore clothes, aired them on the fo'c'sle head, brushed them, and hung them up in the lockers : but the climax of this new land influence was reached by Jim. Up till now he had contented himself with merely a peaked cap and smart badge, of which he remained ridiculously vain. We chaffed him that he would never catch the girls with that unsupported cap : he must don the whole rig. So he purchased the apprentice's uniform of which Plenard was the owner, and Plenard could not have been more delighted : he intended paying off from sailing ships for all time as soon as he got ashore.

Such unusual goings-on ! Hellberg and Koskinnen shook their heads. They disapproved of these preparations.

'You're not in port yet,' they warned. 'No use for sailors to vash deir clothes so near home, but it's vorse to make us paint on Sundays, and ve shall pay for it ! You see, boys, if ve are not right.'

Of course we just laughed at the two, and invited them to come ashore with us at Queenstown. But that aroused indignation.

'My voord !' corrected Koskinnen, 'you make plenty big mistakes if you tink you go ashore in Queenstown. Ven ve arrive dere, ve get our orders from de pilot. Dat's all. Den ve sail perhaps to south of France : maybe to Scandinavia to discharge. Den you go ashore if you like. But many days yet perhaps before you feel de land under your feet.'

Perhaps he might be right after all ?

The sun sank majestically after a lovely day, and the stars came forth, but the air remained breathless. Ships of all sorts passed us in the night, outward bound, home-

ward bound ; liners and cargo-carriers on their lawful occasions. However distant might be their port, each turn of their propellers sent them so much onward, whilst the *Olivebank*, like some great white bird, lay asleep on the tranquil sea.

On Monday a light breeze stirred at break of day ; the sails backed and filled, the blocks rattled and strained aloft, the blue smoke from the galley funnel no longer ascended vertically into still air. A new wind was on its way, so again the sails backed and filled, the ' Old Man ' watching them from the poop till the moment for action.

Two whistle-blasts ! The Watch came shuffling aft.

' Fore starboard braces there ! '

(' Fore st'bd braces,' we repeated sullenly.)

We arrived at the pin-rail and hauled.

(' Oh ! Damn this wind ! Clean out of the east, too ! Very bitch of a breeze : dead ahead ! . . . Ah, well. More days, more dollars ! ')

It freshened, we ran out seaward on the port tack, saying good-bye to the Irish coast. Our precious hopes for Queenstown were dashed to destruction. Four times that day, and twice the next, we wore ship : the ' Old Man ' never trusted ship or crew to put her ' over stay.' Now wearing ship is a heavy task, but to repeat it several times a day put an edge on our tempers as sharp as razors. Had we made any progress with all this beating to windward, never would we have minded a bit ; but each time we sailed on the starboard tack, and picked up the Irish coast again, we had made scarcely any easting. How deadly familiar we became with Galley Head, and the Old Head of Kinsale !

We were indeed being punished. Hellberg and Koskinnen henceforth must be reckoned as true prophets.

But for Sunday's washing and painting we should never have been afflicted with this head-wind. We tried all the old tricks, and lost a couple of good card-packs over the side ; for there is a sea superstition that one pack of playing-cards torn in two will bring a fair wind. Not till the afternoon of Tuesday did the wind suddenly change to south, and our emotions were difficult to control for the joy of this gift.

No need to give us orders this time. We swung the great yards round to the wind amid laughter and merry shouts. The ship gathered speed and began to wipe off the forty or fifty miles that separated us from Queens-town ; yet our luck once more deserted us. Within fifteen miles of the coast another lifeless calm ensued. What to do this time ? We had tried all the traditional superstitions except one : as a last resource Koskinnen raided the Cook's berth aft, delved and discovered the latter's best pair of trousers, then hurled them over to the sea. Here was the supreme offering to fate ; if this didn't work, nothing would, and a good pair of pants would have been lost in vain.

The sun sank, dusk fell over a cloudless sky, another night of waiting faced us, and I was sent to the fo'c'sle head for my look-out. Nor had I been there many minutes than my eyes took in a light straight ahead : a brilliant light, too, and from a masthead. It could only be from a light-vessel. Daunt Rock ! That well-known light-vessel off the Queenstown entrance, which in a previous generation was so familiar a mark to Atlantic travellers before the biggest liners gave up Liverpool for Southampton.

We had been looking for the Daunt all day, but now it was easy to say exactly our position, and I struck 'Three Bells,' the signal to indicate a ship ahead. This

sound brought several of our crew on deck to ascertain what vessel might be bearing down upon our bows. So I just pointed in the direction of Daunt.

'Dat's no bloody light-vessel,' said Hellberg. 'Vere's your glasses?'

A silent pause. During several minutes he scrutinised her carefully.

At length he spoke.

'Dat's de pilot vessel. And she's coming straig' dis way.'

'The Pilot?'

What a lot that word meant!

'Pilot!'

The sensational news ran through the ship like electric spark. All hands turned out to meet this strange sight. Incredible! But pilot ship it was, the white light at her masthead and the red light below settling the matter forthwith. But could she have come out for *us*? Had we got sufficiently near to Queenstown? Was she really just approaching to find who we were?

Here she comes!

She held on straight towards the *Olivebank*, then, as soon as she was so near that we could hear the sound of her auxiliary engine, she bore away on our starboard bow. Our hearts sank: she was going to leave us.

But having arrived abreast of us, she reversed her engines and came to a standstill, a boat was launched, the Pilot rowed off, climbed the ladder we had put out, and then went aft to the Captain. Meanwhile we collected the last drop of gin from the fo'c'sle, gave it to the Irish salt who had brought the Pilot aboard, and learned the latest intelligence. There had been neither wars nor revolutions; England had not been blown up;

London, so far as this seaman knew, carried on much the same as usual, though times were increasingly difficult, and there was less money about than ever.

The Second Mate came down the poop ladder.

We asked what were the orders.

'Cardiff!' he told us.

'Aye, Cardiff, boys,' exclaimed the Irishman. 'And shure, but there's no handier port. Ye'll be there to-morrow, I'm thinkin', as likely as not—given a fair wind. And shure I wish you luck.'

So that was our ultimate destination?

Cardiff! Only two hundred miles away. Not Bordeaux, or Scandinavia. But this was grand news, and assuredly there could be no 'handier' port. To-morrow night, perhaps, we might be there, and in that case we should be home for Whitsun (May 24). It was now May 12.

The Pilot returned to his boat, we waved good-bye and even cheered. Then below we went to read our letters, which the former had brought with him. It was somewhat curious thus to have received a mail at sea, but it was proof enough that Queenstown lay just over there, and Great Britain only a little beyond. After several months without communication the arrival of letters received a dramatic welcome. If the Pilot's visit had been the first human contact again with the world of progress, this bag of correspondence seemed like the grip of a kindly hand. Those fellows who got what they had been expecting at the end of so many weeks were esteemed lucky and greatly envied. But there had arrived no letters for Frank, none for Jim, and none for me. The girl Nancy had evidently forgotten Jim by now; but she had been left so many miles astern that Jim, also, had forgotten and showed little concern.

So the sickle moon sank behind the Irish hills, the stars shone forth, and a faint suggestion of wind stirred the canvas. We squared away for Cardiff, and never saw Queenstown after all. In the darkness we passed the entrance, but I consoled myself with the knowledge that Cardiff would be still nearer to my Sussex home, and the extra sea distance was not worth taking into account. Did not little steamers run across from Queenstown to Wales in one night ?

CHAPTER XIV

ROLLING HOME

BUT our troubles by no means were over, and in truth a new set now began, which proved how unreliable and unpunctual the sail-driven ship compares with other forms of sea-transport. Few lessons could be more obvious—as we presently discovered—than the experience that a windjammer really has no practical relation to modern life. However romantic she may seem because of her connection with the past, and the beauty of her form, it is mere sentimentalism to pretend aught else. She exists for the purpose of carrying cargoes, but if no one can prophesy when (if ever) those cargoes will reach their destined port, how can she possibly compete with the reliable steamer?

If the *Olivebank* were slow, surely she could cover the distance between Queenstown and Cardiff in twenty-four hours, or just over? A 12-knot steamer would do it in twenty hours, and our ship had kept up a speed of $12\frac{1}{2}$ knots when pushed. But the trouble was that we had erroneously imagined Queenstown to be our ultimate end, and the Cook's trousers had been cast overboard too soon, with a result that we now suffered a head-wind. The two hundred miles became multiplied, most of another fortnight was spent boxing up and down the western approaches.

For out of the east blew up dirty weather which

gave us back wet decks, wet fo'c'sles, wet clothes, and in general such conditions as belonged to the past. The black skies seemed fixed permanently, and the rain swept down in sheets. How intolerable that we could not, for our final lap, enjoy the normal south-westerns ! Instead, we must go about on the other tack so many countless times that we lost tally, and failed to understand whether we were heading north, south, east, or west.

With sails reduced to lower topsails, we headed a long way to the southward and lifted to the long Atlantic swell. Next we were off to the north, smashing into the short seas of the Irish Channel, yet we were precious little nearer to Cardiff. The *Olivebank* possessed a reputation for being favoured with unfair winds, and she was determined to impress that quite definitely before she had done with us or we had finished with her. Also, she had made up her mind we should not reach our homes by Whitsun.

On Saturday (May 23) we were still beating up and down somewhere off the mouth of the Bristol Channel. In the language of Jim it was a 'cow' of a wind. It seemed too absurd that here, at the very threshold of our port, we encountered weather which reminded us of Cape Horn. One sea jumped over, flooded a deck-house to the roof, and played the dirtiest tricks to those men inhabiting it. Frank came to me and borrowed some dry clothes, inasmuch as he hadn't a dry stitch left. Hellberg had all his papers washed out of his bunk, including his discharge-sheet, and never saw them again. And if that wasn't a low-down game for old Neptune to spring on a fellow at the end of a long voyage, then I know nothing at all. As to the galley, this became so submerged that a man had to be kept

there busily bailing out the water for the unfortunate Cook, who now imagined himself once more off Cape 'Stiff,' became exceedingly superstitious, and almost dangerous. Can you wonder that we called our *Olivebank* all the worst names out of a sailor's vocabulary?

But such conditions could not last for ever and ever, and on Whitsunday afternoon, May 24, the weather cleared for the present, though the wind backed into the south, which could be no favourable sign. Since as yet it was not blowing hard, we climbed aloft to set more sail and make the best of the slant, so that at length we sighted Lundy Island. Nor can the reader conceive of the delight with which we set eyes on the north Devonshire coast as, with all canvas drawing, we sped along the Bristol Channel for Cardiff.

A Pilot was picked up, and so we continued until about ten miles short of our port. A couple of tugs were standing by, but the 'Old Man' refused their aid and under our own sail we proceeded. At last we came to anchor, and the news flew round that we should have to lie here until Thursday, since no berth was vacant for us in the docks. This seemed an unnecessarily cruel blow. To lie out in the channel after being aboard for eighteen weeks, and not be allowed shore leave, rubbed us on the raw. All night we worked in the rigging to make fast the sails, and give her a 'harbour stow.' We were in none too good a temper, but every sail must be furled along its yard with the greatest neatness and having neither creases nor bunches. The *Olivebank* must look as trim as any training-ship now that she was going into port.

So it was not till the small hours of Whit Monday that we could go below and seek sleep. We spent the

time during the British Bank Holiday watching the traffic passing up and down, and noted with rare interest the signs of life ashore. We appreciated that during the next few days the geography of this anchorage would become fairly familiar to us, yet the sight of land was so refreshing that we could scarce go below. The afternoon arrived, we were still tired out after the latest gale, and deemed that now was the opportunity for a well-earned slumber: the kind of rest which can be obtained only when the ship has completed her voyage and her anchor is down.

But believe me, we had no sooner dozed off than Sherblöm entered the fo'c'sle and summoned us to consciousness.

'Rise up! Rise up!'

British and Scandinavians felt moved to righteous anger.

'Rise up? Vot de hell's de game?'

It was an exclamation of angry astonishment. Weren't we entitled to a little peace even now?

'Rise up dere, de Starboard Watch,' Sherblöm repeated. 'Rise up quick dere! Ve sail de ship.'

Oh! that was a silly joke. Any fool could see through such foolishness.

'Don't be funny!' we implored him, scarcely able to keep leaden eyelids from drooping.

'Dem's de orders. Hurry now, boys. Get to de capstan. We raise de anchor up.'

'Then is the tug-boat here?'

We still felt thoroughly incredulous at this unexpected activity.

'No tug-boat. Ve sail de ship. Hurry up, or de Mate vill be around.'

Amazing!

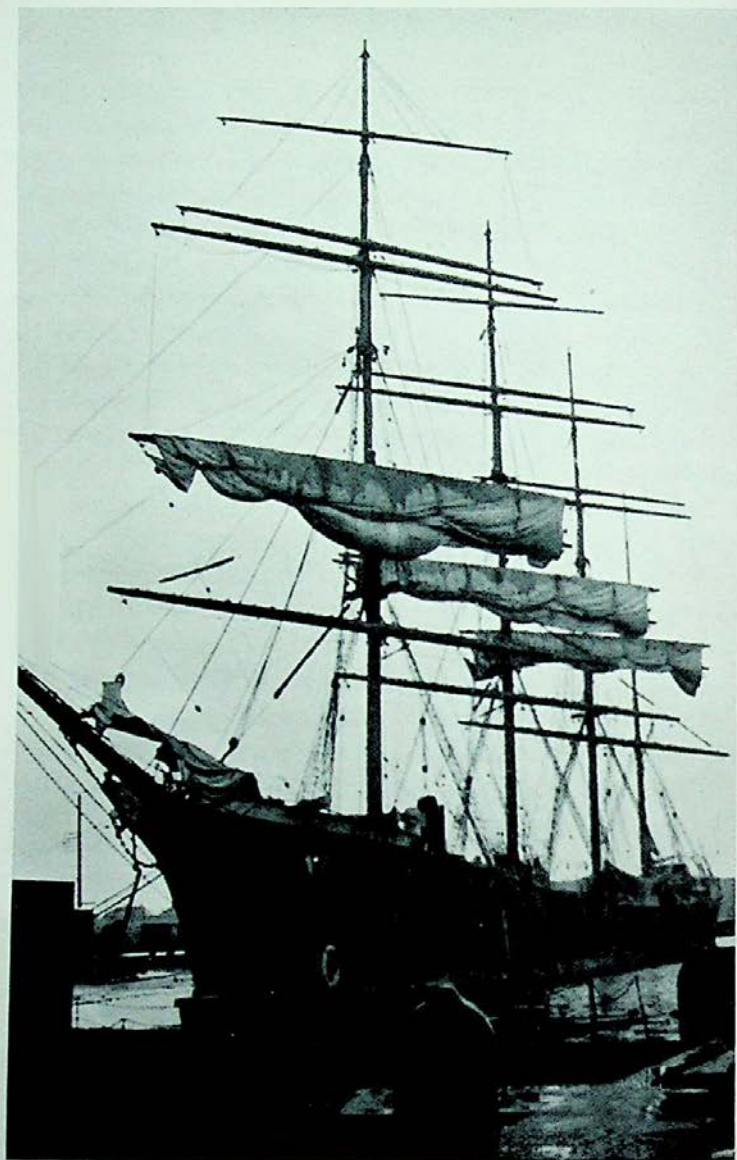
As quickly as we could recover from our astonishment we hopped out. Bank Holiday, too ! The rest of the world might play happily, yet poor sailors must be robbed of even their rightful sleep. The *Olivebank's* owner must be pretty tight-fisted if the Captain couldn't take steam even at this stage.

'Sail de ship ?' And we had so recently given her a 'harbour stow' !

For an hour we hove round the capstan. But why not use the donkey-engine ? Well, of course that had no steam up, so we were compelled to use the capstan on the fo'c'sle head, pushing round with all our weight against the capstan-bars. Hard work ! But harder luck ! And to be sent aloft to unloose our neatly furled sails was the hardest misfortune of all. We said as little as possible, for what use would it be to grumble at the very end of a voyage ? We felt mighty sore, and that was that. With every bit of canvas we now sailed up to the Barry Roads, where the anchor was again let go, and for the second time a 'harbour stow' effected. We did hope that this would not be repeated.

To lie in this roadstead simply meant one step further to our journey's end : it did not mean that we could get ashore. We had fairly well accustomed ourselves to this discipline of waiting by now, and learnt to keep our pent-up feelings from exploding. Plenty of work kept our energies occupied in getting the ship ready for entering the docks. We tackled the sails yet again, but this time unbent them, stowed most of them away in the sail locker ; whilst we unrigged most of the running gear and stowed that in the forepeak. When would it be needed for sea again ? I didn't care, nor when she might leave Cardiff for Finland, where perhaps she would be sold to the ship-breakers.





END OF THE VOYAGE
The Olivebank in Cardiff Docks

On Wednesday the tug came alongside to inform us that at midnight we should be towed into the docks, whereupon 'Timberman' got steam up in the boiler, whilst we hurried forward the preliminaries of warps and so on. To-night, however, descended a violent thunderstorm, followed first by a dense fog and then by a full gale. Result? Impossible to leave our present position. The port anchor started to drag, but we let go the starboard. Further ordeal of waiting, waiting, waiting. Next day the storm had passed; at one o'clock we took the tug and entered Cardiff, where still another delay must be enforced.

We were bound for Spiller's Wharf, but that spot happened not yet to be vacant, so tied up in another basin with the promise that we should be taken away the following afternoon. Such details were of no consequence to most of the crew, but to us Englishmen anxious to be paid off at the earliest opportunity and receive back our freedom, this meant further irritation. However, to be alongside something solid and step ashore on real land was an incredible pleasure—the first time for nineteen weeks. You can understand how strange life had suddenly become.

Plenard and I went off together, but Frank set forth on his own. After nearly five months at sea it is scarcely surprising that we possessed a thirst. Jim, arrayed in his apprentice's cap and best lounge suit, accompanied us as far as the nearest 'pub,' but refused to enter: he had promised his father never to drink, and I admired the young man's strength of mind in resisting our invitations. Plenard was just the reverse, and I had a little trouble in persuading him to leave; but at last we got him into the street, and the three of us started in the direction of Cardiff's west-end. At a street

corner we encountered Frank. He stood there in a state of fear.

This may strike a landsman as extraordinary. Here was a sailor who had been aloft scores of times in bad weather and thought nothing of it ; yet the coming and going of vehicles in a second-grade provincial town completely upset his nerve.

'I'm sure glad to see you,' he greeted, 'but this traffic scares me stiff. Help me across the street.'

We did, and took him by the hand, with great amusement.

Nevertheless, I freely admit that after our wanderings through lonely seas this whirl and noise, this speed and crowding, made all of us giddy ; the rate at which everything travelled alarmed us. Nor was that the only source of terror. We realised that in this world there are objects more beautiful than waves ; creatures more easy to look upon than the female figurehead at *Olivebank's* prow. Every girl to our eyes was a living Venus, nor could we readily accustom our gaze and readjust our vision.

Politicians talk about the freedom of the seas, but we were revelling in the freedom of the shore. Everything was wonderful ; or had that appearance. We went to a theatre that night, and what we saw no doubt was an indifferent show, yet to us it seemed marvellous. We then sought out a café, and there was not much on the menu besides coffee, rolls and butter, omelettes : but we had a gorgeous feed all the same. To taste fresh butter and milk, to eat off a clean white tablecloth, these were the highest forms of luxury.

Next morning we turned out on deck at seven o'clock, and for the last time aboard the *Olivebank*—doubtless, also, for the last time in my life—I was sent aloft to

unloose the main topsails that they might get dry after the night's rain. This comprised the only canvas that had not been stowed below. During the afternoon we were towed up to Spiller's Wharf, and after knocking off at 6 p.m. completed the very last job of work for which I had signed on in Melbourne. That night Frank and I again amused ourselves on land, but on the following morning the 'Old Man' took Bill, Shaw, and myself to the Finnish Consulate. We each received the sum of £9, being our wages for having helped to bring the *Olivebank* from Australia to Cardiff, and were now officially 'paid off.' What a remuneration! If anything were needed to convince people of the archaic conditions which belong to windjammers, it is found at hand. A good deal has been said about the value of a sailing ship as a means of training, and I admit to being one of those who can never lose affection for that most beautiful of all man's creations. But, apart altogether from the dangers and discomforts, you will never induce the present generation to go afloat in such vessels by such meagre pay and such indifferent food.

Other men, like myself, may occasionally sign on for a trip as an adventure or to satisfy a ripe curiosity; but they have to be fairly young and full of a great enthusiasm. It is an experiment that is rarely repeated. Nevertheless, I shall never be sorry that I spent those weeks in a four-masted barque. They taught me things besides seamanship, and impressed on the mind pictures that can never be effaced. They enabled me, by living among them, to understand and sympathise with sailors; to appreciate their problems, and to realise more sensibly than could ever have been learned in books how intolerable must have been the existence aboard sailing ships of the wicked old days.

I was free once again and bound for home. At noon the train for London would carry me away after this sudden break. The taxi came alongside, I had just time for a hurried farewell and to heave my gear ashore. Frank accompanied me to the station : he was departing by a later train for Launceston, and I regretted when we shook hands for the last occasion. During those long watches at sea we had learned to know each other, and a strong friendship had been woven between us. Together we had seen plenty of troubles, and I like to feel that this bond of good-fellowship may last as long as the tides of our lives continue to flow.

The train steamed out of the station and close to Spiller's Wharf. Over the dock sheds rose those well-familiar masts that I had climbed, those yards on which I had contended and sworn. For a moment I caught a glimpse of the whole ship as she lay with strange immobility, but by her graceful lines and beautiful sheer putting all the neighbouring vessels to shame.

Good old *Olivebank* ! You were a heavy-treading, unlucky lady. You were slow and heartbreaking to all of us. But against the furies of wind and the brutal threats of waves you stood up bravely, and you carried us safely across the world without one loss of life. I shall never ship aboard you again : most likely I shall never behold you once more. So good-bye, and good luck !

At least I shall never forget you.

NOTE

FOR the names of a four-masted barque's sails the reader is referred to the illustration in Chapter III, where each is mentioned separately.

By way of clarity the following technical terms may be explained for the benefit of those readers not familiar with seafaring :

Braces are the ropes, which are rove through blocks and employed for swinging the yard, as required, for trimming the squaresail to the wind.

Buntlines are the ropes employed for confining the bunt of the sail to the yard when stowing. The bunt is the baggy centre part of the sail.

Clewlines in the same manner pull the clews (*i.e.* the lower corners) of the squaresail up to the yard. Gaskets are the lines which are then passed under to keep the stowed sail from blowing about.

Crossjack (Cro'jack) yard. The lower square yard of the mizzen-mast. Whilst this has been in use since the seventeenth century, it was originally employed not for setting a sail but for extending the mizzen topsail sheets. It was therefore known to the French as the '*vergue sec,*' or barren yard. In 1840 a Yankee skipper introduced a sail to this yard, and the practice was adopted by British sailing ships during the latter part of that century.

Fib-boom is the spar which continues the projection of the bowsprit, though latterly sailing ships possessed a combination of these two spars.

Jigger-mast. In a four-masted barque the masts (reckoning from for'ard to aft) are named foremast, mainmast, mizzenmast, and jigger-mast.

Sheets are the ropes for controlling the squaresails at the clews, or lower corners.

Truck is the small wooden cap at the summit of a mast.

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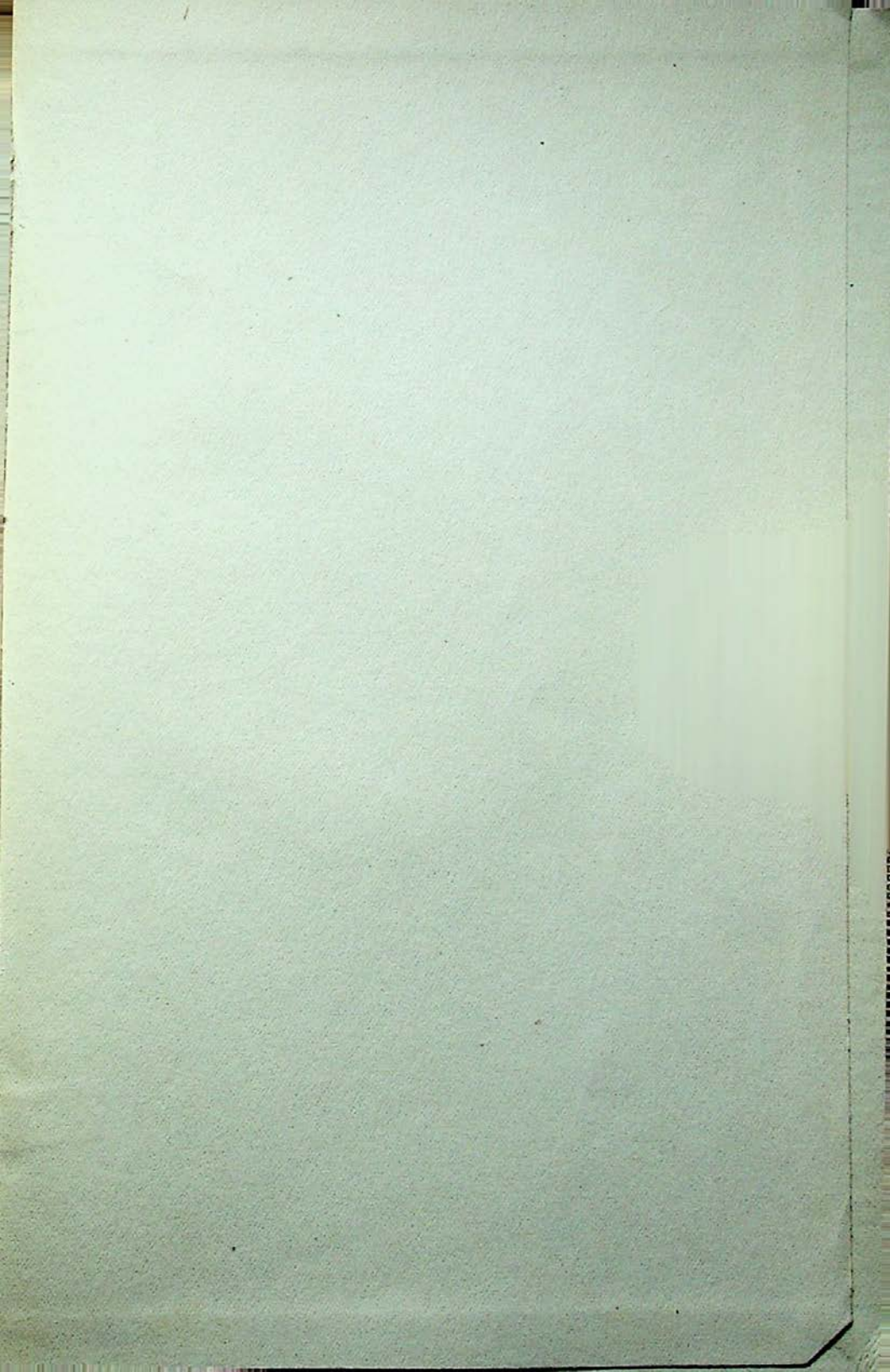
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